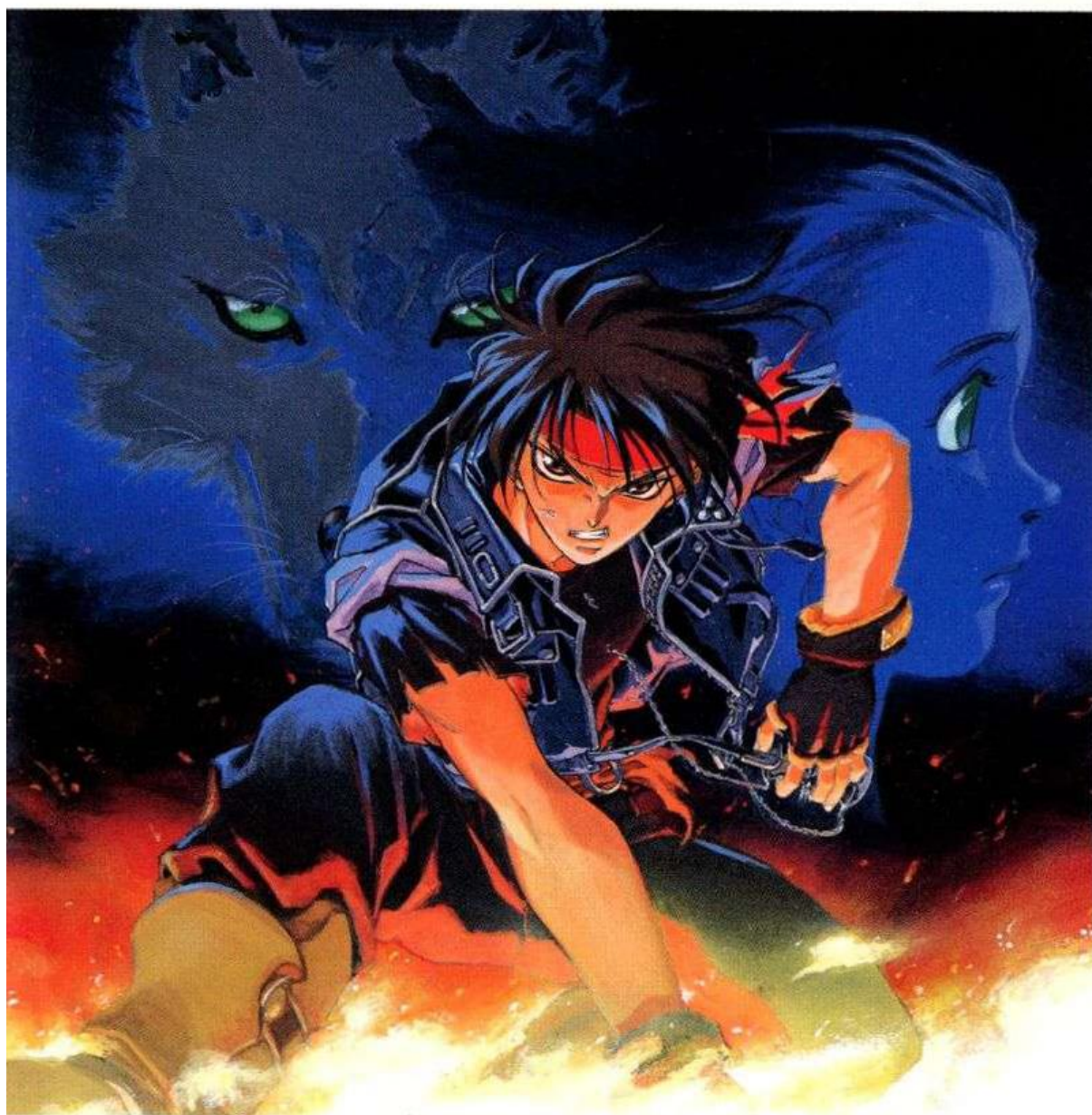


SORCEROUS STABBER ORPHEN
VOLUME 4
WOLVES, GATHER IN THE FOREST



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「魔術士……」
「え？」
マジクは振り向いて絶句した……

魔術士オーフェンはぐれ旅
我が森に集え狼

村の中心に、
天まで焦がすような
火柱が噴きあがる！
「あれは……魔術の炎だ！」





背後から、なにが圧倒的な威圧感のようなものを感じて、
クリーオウは、不意に言葉を飲み込んだ



Prologue

“You have to become strong.”

These were her mother’s last words.

When she was going to become alone, this is what her mother told her.

Upon hearing this, it didn’t make her happy. How would she become strong? She had no clue.

This happened three years ago. Three years later, she is still running around in the forest.

To run in the forest you need two things, courage and skill.

She violently breathed through her mouth, the only direction she could run was forward. Originally she wanted to find some mushrooms in the forest, so she wore an open-collar green shirt and shorts, a simple dress wouldn’t be appropriate. Naturally her legs had bruises all over, weeds and wild bushes had made sure of this. The bushes and branches had also punctured her skin, causing blood to run down her legs. The summer air in the forest was hot, which made her choke a little while trying to breath. Looking upwards, she saw the sun shining through the trees——

If you set eyes upon her, she would look like someone about to enter high school. She was not used to a forest environment, however her village was on the frontier and was surround by forests. Her arms were short, similar to that of livestock, and her overall look gave her the impression of a farmer, though that would change depending on who would look at her. She had black hair and a ponytail, her brown eyes kept watch on what was in front of her as she ran. Suddenly, she tripped, but——

(I mustn’t stop——)

She didn’t want to stop. From the beginning she had felt an intense rumbling in her chest, she would reach her limit soon. Here eyelids were swollen, she was sleepy and just wanted to forget this stumble.

(I mustn’t stop——)

She repeated silently to herself. She didn’t look back, lest the footsteps coming from behind her would catch up. People were chasing her, three people from the village to be precise. When she went outside the village, they followed her, she’s been running ever since ——

What will happen when they catch her? She didn’t know, but the three men were still tracking her, they instinctively tracked her using only their senses. They made no sound, didn’t even say “Stop” or “wait”, they just tried to catch up to her.

Her mind was relatively calm knowing this——nevertheless she still tried to make an effort to run, even if she would be caught sooner or later. If she was caught, she would make no effort to resist.

(I mustn’t stop——)

She knew this, but——

(I have to die——)

She said inside herself.

Suddenly, her body fell to the ground. She fell down, her face hit the roots of a tree. She rolled over, her back pressed against the forest.

From the moment rolled over, she could see the figure of a man towering above her. A feeling of disgust spread throughout her body, but, this stopped, her body was extremely tired and she couldn't move anymore. She breathed deeply, it hurt.

(I can't stand up——)

A whimper came from her throat, she needed something to support herself——but this was impossible.

(If I don't escape——)

She wanted to drag herself through the forest, she wanted to move forward——but this was impossible.

At that moment, something grabbed her ankle.

“.....!”

She saw the face of a young boy standing beside her. Her right hand moved instantly, she tried to scratch his face with her nails, with little effort her nails scratched the teenagers ache covered face. But she was the one who felt pain, her nails were broken.

The teenager outstretched his arm, his arm reaching into her collar. She then heard her shirt buttons being undone.

“Mommy...!”

She cried, as she bit the teenagers arm. The teenager yelled, but it barely fazed him. She wanted to take this opportunity to escape, but his heavy arms pinned her down to the ground, there was nowhere to escape.

Tears blurred her vision——she looked up, the teenager was still on top of her, he looked down, breathing heavily all the while. She bit down on the teens hand again, but she was fearful that he would turn his fists on her——

“You have to become strong.”

A voice rang out across the vast emptiness. It was her dead mother's voice.

“You have to learn to live alone——”

(Impossible!)

The girl shouted in fear. A pair of hands were raised in front of her. There was no escape——

She tried to lift her head, but this resulted in her getting a black eye.

She felt no pain. Her eyes were closed the moment she was hit. This time she lifted her head so fast she caught the boy off-guard, her head collided with his. A feeling of paralysis spread to her brain. She didn't notice the boy yelling, blood was running down his head, but her breathing stopped, her body was wrought with spasms.

She didn't feel this for too long, the she woke up.

“.....?”

Intense pain came from her head, she stood up, touched her hair—head, face, body, all of these places were covered in blood. She then saw the figure of the boy, his body was slumped in the forest.

Tap, Tap.....

Steps came from the grass behind her, she was surprised, and looked behind her. A huge figure was standing there, it was as if the forest was divided into two halves.

The girl could feel it, it was a deity.

It had a flashing black body, and was rounded and curvy, the girl thought it was a woman.

It was actually an animal. Its head was three or four meters off the ground, and had the body of a giant black wolf—it was truly a sight to behold, regardless of whether you were religious or not. Its big green eyes observed everything.

The girl knew the name of the beast.

“The Deep-Wolf——”

This forest—in the last unexplored continent—in the great forests that occupy the Kiesaruhima continent, there once lived the Dragon race.

“Your name?”

Suddenly, a voice appeared in her mind. She saw that the dragon was watching her instinctively, she replied: “F-Fiena, of Sorichian village.....”

The Dragon went on to say: “You died.”

“What.....?”

Fiena asked, puzzled. The Dragon said: “However, I revived you——”

“You.....saved me? Me——”

She cried as she saw that her entire neckline was covered in blood.

“I fight for my race.....I exist solely as guardian of this continent. In the end, we let you live, and also let you die.”

“I-I just wanted to thank you——”

She wanted to what happened to the boy, but thought otherwise. The Dragon said slowly:

“Little girl, your head and body—I can’t explain how, so you must understand.....when I save lives remuneration is required.”

“.....”

“I need you. You are obliged to be my eyes and ears. I can’t give you much time. You need to understand this quickly.....”

Fiena didn’t understand. The Dragon didn’t speak anymore, it readied its huge body to move quickly.

The Dragon slowly left with beautiful posture. The sun obscured her from seeing it head deep into forest, though she could hear its footsteps. She felt that this was the legendary

Dragon Warrior, the impression it gives is that of death. Fiena motionlessly watched the Dragon walk away, until it disappeared completely into the darkness of the forest.

Sorcerous Stabber Orphen
Volume 4

Wolves, gather in the forest

Chapter 1

The forest priestess

Chapter 1 – The forest priestess

“Well, that’s the last one.”

He finished readying himself for another hit, he hit Cleo in the nose this time, she let out a faint groan. They were in the forest, sunlight was pouring down through the trees. The trees were several meters high and organized into groups—they weren’t far from the main road, but this wasn’t a tourist attraction. In the future it would have been refreshing to take a stroll in this forest—except Cleo bought herself a purple sweater and shorts at the local market.

She had to buy new shorts since her old ones were dirty, naturally Cleo was angry—

Orphen chuckled at this. He was a black sorcerer around twenty years old, and he was laughing. He had black hair, black eyes, a medium build, he didn’t look all that special. Most of his clothing was black, he wore a silver pendant, a dragon wrapped around a sword. It looked sharp—and sinister, it gave off a poisonous vibe.

He put a bunch of wooden strips onto the ground, then proudly said:

“I won the game—any objections?”

“No.....”

Cleo said reluctantly, as she lowered her voice.

“I’m getting sick of this!”

“Losing can be hard.”

He said, as he rubbed the scarf on his head.

“But now we get to the best part of the game, since you lost ten rounds you have to do what I say.”

“Of course—how could I forget? I’ll just go and make something terrible to eat.”

Cleo said, as she kicked a bowl in his direction.

“Easy, I was only joking.”

She glared at him, holding her sword all the while.

“Don’t think a little fencing training can make you a match for me, I was trained in the Tower of Fang, remember?”

Orphen pulled out his dragon pendant. It was a dragon wrapped around a sword, proof that the wearer was from the Tower of Fang.

“From weapons to magic, I was taught it all. You are no match for me.”

“Well, that’s nothing but pure rhetoric to me. We won’t know who the best is unless we have a little duel. What do you say?”

“You’re starting to sound like that Vulcan guy.....”

Orphen could see that her eyes were half open, he sighed.

“Okay, what else do you propose?”



“I know!”

Cleo said angrily, as she grabbed her sweater.

“Well—I’ll go and chop firewood or do the dishes.”

“No, I don’t want to have to go looking for you. Or have you doing something easy.”

Orphen thought for a moment, he knew he had to give her something to do.

“.....Your statement is very suspicious. Are you saying you want me to do all the work?”

“Simply put, yes.”

Orphen slowly walked towards the wagon, he pointed his finger towards a simple chest.

“What do you mean?”

She asked, Orphen could feel her muscles twitch.

“You asked me what I meant! This is what I meant! Last time I told you to help me sew the broken shirts, and that’s exactly what you’ll do.”

“What? None of that was my fault, you can’t make me do all that work. This is slavery!”

“I won the game, this is your punishment. So don’t try and change the subject.”

“I didn’t try and change the subject.”

“Good answer. Now get to work.”

Cleo was full of rage.

“Well, don’t blame me if all the clothes are sewed back together with handkerchiefs!”

“Quit your whining!”

Orphen shouted. But he wasn’t a stranger to handkerchief stitched clothes, when he was young his sister would do this all the time. One time he received a pretty handkerchief patch was a present from his sister, he had always wondered if this was intentional, since there was a lot of rags she could have used instead.

“Ah, as expected—it really is a huge forest.”

The thick piece of paper he was holding was a map, it displayed the entire continent. The region he was looking at was the Fenrir Forest, which accounted for more than twenty percent of the continent. One of the last places which hasn’t been fully explored on the continent.

“There should be all kinds of wild beasts in this forest.”

The blond haired boy with green eyes said. He was almost fifteen, he wore a black shirt, black leather trousers, most of his outfit was black, and it really didn’t suit him at all. But nevertheless he wore it.

(Someday I'll earn this attire.)

He optimistically thought, since he would have to wait until he became a decent sorcerer.

"According to the legend, the goddess of existence should be here, but the powerful dragon race guards it....."

He said as he looked up. The forest was a lush dark green, trees and bushes were everywhere.

"Oh..."

He unconsciously said.

"There's a spring."

He wasn't near a river——nearby there was a swamp but it was too dangerous, so he avoided it.

The young boy walked until he reached the spring, most of the lush trees and bushes were gone now, suddenly a spring appeared in front of him. The water was calm, there wasn't even a trace of ripples in the water. It was more like a small lake than a spring actually, there was plants under the water, this gave it a wonderful colour.

He got closer to the water, and gently stroked his finger in it, causing some ripples. Then suddenly——

Snap.

It sounded like something fell behind him. A few meters away was a long serpent, it came down from the tree above.

He subconsciously raised his hand and said:

"Nice meeting you here——"

The serpent responded to his sentence——it saw it as a challenge and moved quickly towards him, its black scales glistening in the sunlight.

Instinctively, the boy waved his hands and shouted:

"Sword of light, whom I do release!"

A wave of light and heat appeared in front of the teenager, the serpent's jaw and lower body was blown off by the explosion, it went into spasms for a while before finally dying.

"This forest really is dangerous."

He said as he wiped the sweat off his forehead.

"Great, I did it just like Master. I must remember how simple it is."

He then took a look around. The use of fire in a forest is very dangerous, he was lucky the forest had adequate moisture, otherwise he might have caused a blaze he wouldn't be able to control.

He thought about this, then all of a sudden he heard a voice.

"A Sorcerer....."

"Huh?"

The boy looked around for the origin of the voice. He opened his mouth, but he was unable to speak.

There was a woman standing on the opposite side of the water—or rather a young girl, he estimated that she was about the same age as him, maybe younger. He looked into her eyes, he could feel a powerful force peering out at him.

(Did she step out of the bushes to fight.....?)

He didn't know why he thought that, maybe he was just surprised by all of this.

The girl continued to look at him, she wore an expression of dismay on her face. Majic thought that maybe it would turn into a beautiful smile. Her black hair was really straight, it went all the way down her back. Her dress was even more surprising—it looked like her body was wrapped in a thin bathrobe made out of silk.

“.....Excuse me, Miss?”

He was wondering if the girl could even speak.

“You are a sorcerer, right?”

“Me? Well, no—I'm just a trainee.”

He hastily replied.

“I see.....so you are just a trainee?”

“Yeah, my Master is much more powerful than me.”

“Oh...so you have companions with you...”

The girl muttered, then she fell silent. Majic felt a little bored, he scratched his head.

(This woman gives me the feeling of isolation, her attire is also bizarre considering we are in a forest.)

“Well, what's your name?”

“Fiena.....”

“That's a good name.”

He said some flattering words, she faintly smiled when she heard them.

“Thank you, what's your name?”

“Majic.”

“A-Are you a noble?”

She——Fiena noticed the colour of his hair, ordinary people didn't have blonde hair.

“No, I've got nothing to do with nobility, I was just born this way.”

While he did find it flattering, he would always object to people thinking he was a noble.

Fiena came closer to Majic, he did the same.

As she walked, she said:

“.....Why are you here? People from the human world don't come here, it's a secret place.”

As she was walking, her shoulders moved left to right. Majic replied:

“I was walking, I guess I got lost.”

He then took out the map from his pocket and showed it to her.

“Okay.....I’ll bring you out of here. The forest is very dangerous. It can make people.....dream.”

“Thank you—but, what do you mean by that?”

Majic stopped and asked. She just shrugged and didn’t answer.

“Can I ask you a question?”

Majic crossed his arms.

“What are you doing in the forest?”

She answered him right away. It was like—she was waiting for this opportunity.

“My strength lies with my contact with the forest, I can’t leave.”

“.....Ah?”

Fiena solemnly continued:

“In the forest, I can use my power. Just like you.”

“You can do that sort of thing?”

Majic asked, she nodded her head.

“Yes. I’m..... suffering from a dominant force.”

“Oh. So you must be a priestess.”

Majic exclaimed as they walked in the forest. Of the continent’s most well-known three goddess of fate, Fiena appeared to be a member of a frontier faith.

(Master should know more about this, though I’m sure he would probably laugh at the uncivilized religion or something like that.)

“I guess being a priestess is pretty tough.”

Majic said in a relaxed tone.

“I’ve.....become strong.”

She said in a low voice.

“The power, it.....”

Majic patted the back of her head, he said slowly:

“Is this stuff really important?”

“Yes, to me it is.”

Fiena’s answer was a little ambiguous, she looked at Majic, then said:

“You have companions, so can you ask them for help?”

“Yeah.....I guess so.”

Majic thought about his Master——Orphen.

A shadow appeared over Fiena’s eyes.

“I can’t. I can only obey.”

“Ah.....?”

Majic didn’t understand what she was saying. He gave her a puzzled look, then followed her forward.

Suddenly, she turned around and grabbed her chest, then she said:

“You came from the outside? The outside world.”

“Outside.....you mean outside the forest? Yeah, we came from there.”

Majic didn’t know how to answer her. Fiena continued to listen, her eyes shimmered in this dull moment. Her black hair fluttering in the wind.

“What has become of the outside world? There is a village nearby called Sorichian, did you pass it?”

“No, though we might be heading there next. We came from the south.”

“The south——you say?”

Fiena mused for a moment, she wanted to know more about the outside world.

“Where else did you come from?”

“Well, I came from Totokanta, then we spent some time in Alenhatan and Kink hall. Me and my companions have been all over the place.”

He said as he looked at the map. Fiena leaned towards him, she looked at the map too. When her bare arm touched his elbow, Fiena curiously asked:

“I can see the Tower of Fang on that map, did you study there?”

She looked at Majic’s black sorcerer clothing. Majic shook his head and put away the map.

“Though one day I would like to study there, they offer good scholarships.”

“By the way, you said your master is powerful?”

“Yeah, he was once a candidate for a top position in the Tower of Fang.”

“Is that true?”

Her tone was like that of a joke. Majic had a wry smile on his face.

“I’m joking——if that was true, I would be the disciple of the continent’s strongest sorcerer.”

“I see.”

She immediately agreed.

“Isn’t it better to be just a disciple?”

“No, I don’t think so.”

Majic simply answered. This was from his heart, he didn't want to be under someone forever.

Fiena gently said:

"You don't sound too positive."

Her eyes seemed infected with a muddy colour for a moment, then they went back to normal.

(It seems this girl has two different faces, a priestess and a normal girl.)

"I'm guessing you are a native to this place."

She gently nodded, Majic said brightly:

"You can't possibly live in this place, don't you live in a nearby village?"

If this was true, Majic intended to go to this village. But she shook her head, and answered in a priestess' voice:

"In this forest, there are villages. Although they aren't on the map."

"There are?"

Majic asked, she made a gesture towards the surrounds, then said:

"The people in the villages say the forest has power.....we call it the great heart."

"The great heart....."

Majic repeated the name.

Frontier religions, in fact not all exist in the frontier regions——many of them exist on the outskirts of cities like Totokanta. So you've just got to look for the presence of these religions. In fact, a new religion was created in the city of Kimurakku only a couple of hundred years ago.

(This great heart, it may turn out to be a third-rate religion or piece of art.)

Fiena went onto say:

"Don't you like it?"

"I do, it sounds interesting."

Majic didn't know how to answer. Fiena spoke in an invitational tone:

"I'm certain that you would be welcome in the village."

".....Ah?"

Majic felt very strange. Fiena continued talking:

"You're beautiful, I'm sure you'd make a good priestess if you stayed."

Upon hearing this, Majic fell head first, tumbling into the ground.

"I-I....."

He said, as he stood up and brushed the soil from his body. His face became a little contorted, he didn't know how to react.

"You're not a girl, are you?"

"Occasionally people seem to think so."

"Don't worry, boys are still welcome."

"Well, let's hope these villages are really interesting."

Majic said. Fiena smiled.

"I was also surprised when I first came here six months ago.....although I wasn't born here, I think of it as my home."

"I see."

Fiena began talking as they walked, her tone was kind of monotone. Then all of a sudden Fiena stopped, her face became serious.

"What's wrong?"

Majic asked. She looked at the surrounds, then said:

"I'm sorry."

".....What?"

Majic didn't know what she meant, he stared at her motionlessly.

"There's still time, you should escape....."

She whispered. Then suddenly, whispers could be heard in the forest.

"Compassion is a virtue, but don't betray us, Fiena."

A voice said.

"Huh?"

Majic was surprised, he tried looking for the source of the voice. Then, a tall man slowly stepped out of the lush vegetation.

Two other people followed soon after. The three men looked like farmers, they were holding hatchets and spears.

One word instantly appeared in Majic's mind, trap.

"W-Why?"

Majic faced Fiena, she shook her head and didn't answer him. She then spoke to the tall man:

"Like fish in a river. The sorcerer has companions, they will search for him soon enough."

"Two birds with one stone, eh? Good work, Fiena."

The man began to walk towards Fiena at a slow pace. He had a pointy beard on his chin, a solemn look on his face, looked around thirty or forty years old, his sharp eyes would also make anyone uncomfortable.

He smiled at Fiena, then said:

"The sorcerer must be punished, we can't let him get away."

“And——”

Majic suddenly felt another man approach him from behind, he turned to face him. This one was different from the others, he clearly seemed to be military, his outfit was a leather shirt and jacket, but the military badges were obviously removed. He also had a vast assortment of knives on his jacket, and a scabbard at his side.

“We’ll be ready to meet his companions.”

The tall man went on to say:

“The forest belongs to us, anyone who casually enters it must be punished.”

“But I thought the forest’s management rights belonged to the Kimurakku church and the Royal Family?”

The tall man laughed.

“Haha! Are you expecting that to mean something?”

“You mean——”

Kimurakku was the church’s headquarters, they have a presence all over the continent. The Royal Family——they are the combined forces of the aristocracy, to say the least.

“We have Fiena.”

Then, the tall man placed a hand on her shoulder. Fiena winched in fear. Now all the men’s faces were filled with smiles.

(These people, they are strange.....are they some type of mad cult?)

Majic thought.

(I don’t think I’ll receive any mercy. If master was here, he’d certainly wouldn’t stay.)

“But.....”

Majic sounded smug.

“What?”

Majic slowly walked towards the tall man, he tried to remain calm.

“Am I allowed to shout?”

“.....Huh?”

The man in the army jack didn’t react. The tall man said:

“Calling for help is useless. Your comrades won’t hear you.”

“Oh, I know that.”

Majic made an innocent smile.

“Just for a moment, I want to shout.”

“You are a strange guy.....what are you going to shout?”

“It’s——”

Majic looked towards the man, he then took a deep breath and shouted:

“Master, you are a fool who occasionally gives me something decent to eat.”

He said with all his might, he then grabbed Fiena by the arm. He pulled her from the man’s arms, then took a few steps backwards.

“.....What did you just shout?”

“I was just nonsense.”

Majic smiled and shrugged.

At this point—the men were stuck in a daze, then large pieces of black stuff started to fall.

“Aaaaaaah!”

The men started to scream. Falling from the tree was a serpent, it had fallen off one of the trees branches.

“Ahhhh!”

It suddenly landed and crushed one of the men, they were flung into a panic.

“Makudogaru!”

That seemed to be the tall man’s name, though Majic didn’t really care.

“Just run away——”

Majic pulled Fiena’s hand. She didn’t fully understand what was happening, she blinked and said:

“W-What’s going on?”

“It’s magic. I just shouted and it was converted into an incantation, it broke the branches.”

Not just black sorcerers, but any human on the continent could use magic as a sound medium. In other words, the contents of the incantation doesn’t really matter, as long as your voice is used a medium, the magical effect will still launch. However, it does require a certain level of concentration.

Majic glanced at the snake fighting the men, he seized Fiena’s arm.

“We’ve got to run away, now!”

“B-But——”

“What!?”

Majic unconsciously shouted.

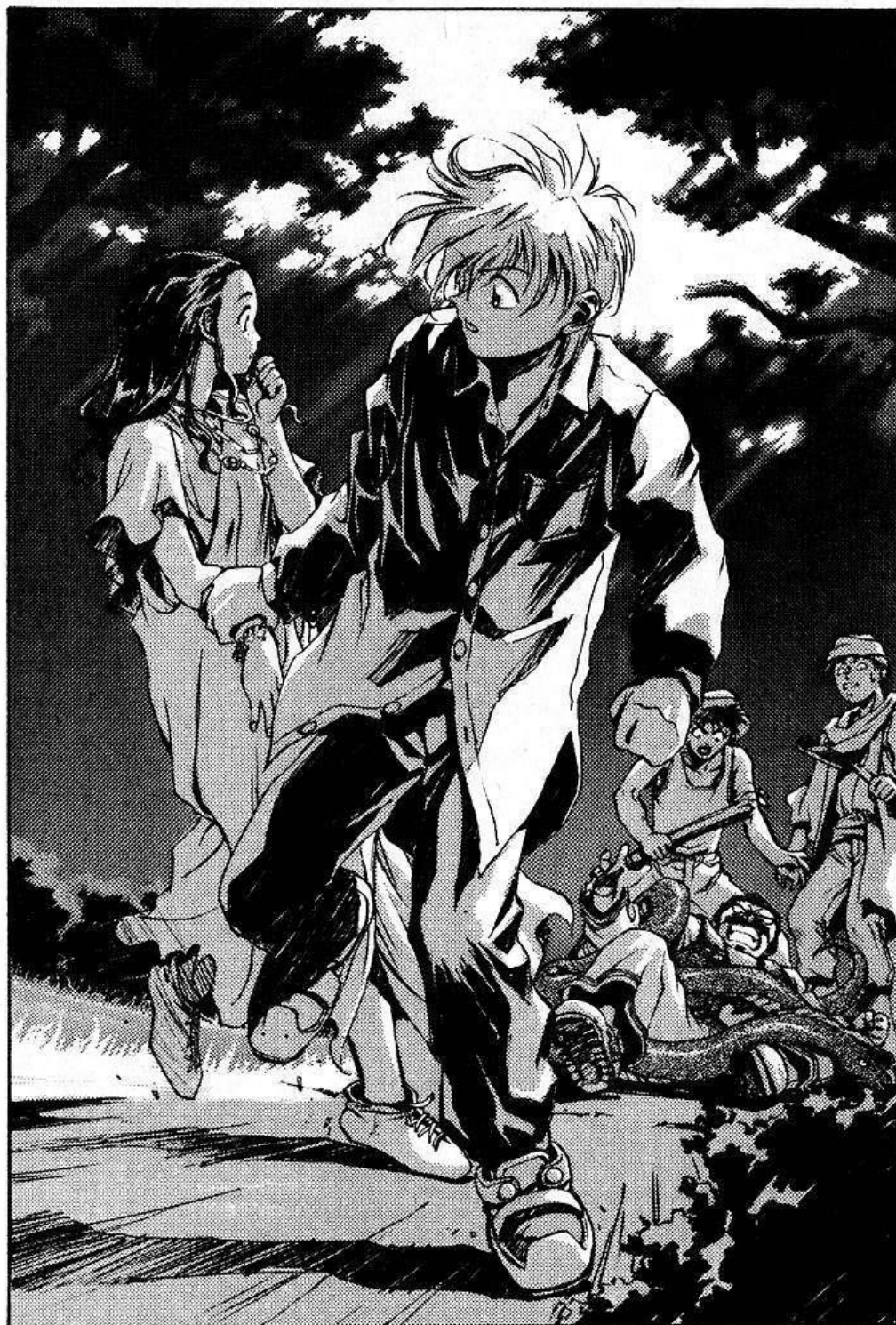
“My success rate with magic isn’t too high! I won’t be able to use the same trick twice. We’ve got to move.”

“We won’t make it.”

Fiena’s voice was full of doubt. Majic became annoyed, he pulled her arm.

“Don’t you understand, if you stay you’ll be a priestess forever!”

“.....Huh.....?”



Fiena blinked her eyes a few times, she was bewildered. At that time——

Bang!

It was a loud sound. Majic suddenly felt strange, he had let go of Fiena's hand.

“What happened.....?”

Majic looked backwards, the men had stopped panicking. Makudogaru was staring directly at him, his face filled with anger.

Majic stared at him motionlessly, he felt a silent horror come over himself. Makudogaru pointed something that was made of metal towards him.

Bang——

A flash came from the piece of black iron, at the same time, Majic felt a strong impact on his stomach——all of the pain was concentrated in one point, it was enough to send him crumpling to the ground.

“Ahh.....!”

Fiena's scream sounded so far away. He felt like he was being sucked into a never ending hole into the ground, it was an unrelenting feeling.

“.....”

“.....!”

“.....!”

His vision quickly degenerated into an array of white light, at this rate he would soon lose consciousness, but the footsteps of the men kept him awake a little longer.

“.....!”

“.....”

It sounded like the men were in a bitter quarrel——it seemed to be about Fiena.

Endless chills were now going through Majic's body, he knew if this feeling continued he would probably die. In his last seconds, Majic heard Makudogaru say something.

“Fiena, give him treatment.”

She responded in a very low voice, he couldn't hear exactly what was being said.

At the same time, his cold and trembling body was suddenly surrounded in warmth. This feeling——is it her hand? ——Somehow she was injecting heat into his body, soon it would flow throughout his entire body.....

(Endless falling——Fiena——can't escape——forest——priestess ——man——in his hand——black iron——)

In the chaos that was Majic's consciousness, he finally realized——

It was a pistol.

Chapter 2 – The Deep Dragon

“So, these guys know how to deal with it.”

Orphen crossed his arms, facing a tree from the road, five men were dangling with their hands tied. Next to them was a carriage, it seemed they were preparing to make camp, but due to an unexpected event everything was a mess. Cleo stood behind him, she said profoundly:

“This is really cruel——”

She was referring to the attackers who were hung up. Orphen responded, never looking back.

“There’s no need to take pity on them when they attacked us with weapons. Besides, you were the first person who started hacking at them when they came charging, weren’t you?”

“I did not hack.....I merely didn’t think I could swing a sword so fast.”

Cleo remembered the previous event, it sent a chill down her spine. Orphen reluctantly said:

“Relax, everything’s fine now.”

Then, Cleo relaxed her shoulders. She had replaced her soiled pants, putting on a new shirt and pair of jeans. The shirt was a deep tan colour, it was Majic’s, she was worried about splattered blood, so she looked back and forth several times.

“After all, they had a bunch of short sticks and knives, it was hard enough.”

“Come on, with proper training you could have easily taken them all out.”

Orphen said, trying to relax the upset Cleo.

“You don’t get it, Orphen. You aren’t the one who can’t use magic, I mean look at the damage you caused.”

She pointed into the forest. There was a large number of trees which were uprooted, scorched earth was visible for several meters in numerous directions. Orphen deliberately didn’t look at it, he said:

“I was trying to protect you.”

“That sounds like a hypocritical lie to me.”

Cleo was angry now, she put some distance between her and Orphen. Then, she approached the sword on the ground—it was covered in blood, she turned around and said:

“Don’t you think you should clean the blood off the sword?”

Orphen replied:

“People are responsible for their own things.”

“But.....I’m not good with blood.”

“You used the sword so obviously there’s blood on it, it’s not a big deal.”

“Well girls aren’t used to this sort of thing, Orphen.”

“Then please don’t use a sword next time.”

He was getting fed up with her whining.

“Older people can’t always forgive the misgivings committed by the young, deal with it.”

“That’s something my father would have said.”

“Stop moving that mouth of yours.....”

Orphen said with his eyes half open. He looked at the five individuals that were hung up. They were all passing out—they had been strung up for too long.

Cleo still didn’t touch the sword, there was nothing else to do but continue talking.

“Your dad.....did he say something like that before he died?”

“You only die once, make your last words meaningful——though he actually said that after getting the doctors diagnosis.”

Cleo threw him a flirtatious look, then she began to move towards the blood stained sword.

It was very wonderful, he was very happy. He was so comfortable that this dead feeling to last forever.

Safety! ——No cold! ——No heat! ——No hunger! ——No loan shark! ——Thinking about those things, to live a life without the good things was unbearable.

So.....he cried for some time, until finally he realized one thing.

“This isn’t the most common thing in the world.....it isn’t.....”

When he thought of this, it made him infinitely sad. Dortin wiped the crystal ashtray with a soft cloth, he had a sudden chill, then wrapped his collar around him.

His type of “people” are about one hundred and thirty centimetres tall——they live only on the southern part of the island called Masmaturia. Their traditional outfit consists of wrapping themselves in fur and cloaks. This peculiar one wore thick glasses, and was seventeen years old. Because of his physical stature, one wouldn’t be able to tell his age.

Dortin looked around the room, it was neat and tidy, it was a reception room. He didn’t know why this place was geographically isolated, but the room’s furnishings looked very ordinary.

Dortin sighed, he had finished rubbing the ashtray and put it back on the table.

“Brother.....you never clean anything when you are finished.”

“What did you say?”

His brother turned and looked at him.

“Dortin, let me explain something to you.”

“Okay.”



Dortin impatiently responded.

"I am the Masmaturian Bulldog, how can I engage in such inferior work?"

He held up on finger, then pushed it against Dortin's head.

"Brother.....think about it more calmly."

"Calmly?"

Out of all the people in the world—to claim that Vulcan could be calm would be to debate whether the world was flat or round.

"Try and act like you can get me to clean this place again and I'll drown you in soy sauce!"

Vulcan shouted as he clenched his fist. Dortin's eyes began to swell, he went back to cleaning the place—but the ashtray had seemly disappeared.

"Strange....."

Dortin looked around, obviously puzzled.

(What is it this time.....?)

He gave up looking and began to clean the cigar box, rubbing it gently. It was then that he noticed a young man standing next to him.

"Hey."

The man greeted them with a smile. He was wearing a wrinkled shirt, his coat had a badge on it and looked military. There was a sword hanging by his waist, it was nothing like the one Vulcan had.

"Ah, hello, Sarua."

Vulcan suddenly spoke in a respectful tone.

The man took a quick glance around the room, checking if anything was missing. He looked at Dortin, he couldn't see the ashtray. He ignored it for now, then said:

"Your information was correct, Vulcan.....we caught some sorcerer kid."

"Ah, I see."

After listening to his brother's answer, Dortin thought about Majic.

(Poor guy, I hope they don't hurt him.)

Vulcan looked at Dortin, he eyes narrowed in on him like a snake ensnares his prey, with a flattering voice he said:

"What about the black sorcerer? You know, the one with the dragon pendant from the Tower of Fang....."

"Other people are responsible for his capture. Although I haven't received a report yet, there should be no problem. Five men were sent, all of them able bodied. He should receive quite the surprise."

Sarua shrugged, he then put a hand on his chin and send on to say:

“Since the information you provided proved to be true, the boss wants to reward you, but you’ll have to wait until after dinner—he wants that sorcerer kid to suffer first.”

He smiled.

“You do know that we and the boss hate sorcerers?”

“No—I didn’t know.”

Dortin answered, Vulcan was bewildered. He didn’t expect Dortin to be listening to their conversation.

Sarua laughed.

“It’s got to do with the terms of man—and our noble religious teachings, you don’t need to know any more than that. This is for your own good, and you’ll stay here and clean in the meantime.”

Sarua then left the reception room. His soles dragging on the floor, then not long after the sound of his footsteps were gone—Dortin slowly said:

“Only five people were sent, I don’t think that’ll be enough to take out the loan shark.”

“.....”

Vulcan ignored him.

“I don’t care.....if anything goes wrong you’ll get the blame anyway. It’s divine retribution.”

“Ah, do you think they’ll accept an apology?”

Vulcan said with a shaky voice. Dortin coldly replied.

“Probably not.....and if they do what I think they’ll do to that sorcerer kid then what do you think they’ll do to us?”

“Ah.....”

Vulcan became aware of the severity of their situation. He struggled to groan, a chill went up his back, he reluctantly said:

“We.....e-escape, but how?”

“This village is in the middle of the forest, we can’t escape. We don’t know the way out!”

Dortin sighed, he looked at the walls of the reception room, one of the paintings on the wall was a map of the surrounding villages.

The vast warrior towns of “the forest of Fenrir”. There is a red dot in the centre, these are the “great heart” villages.

“This is the place, this is where Majic was taken.”

It is a dark night—

Orphen said, his face hidden in the grass. Cleo was clutching his shoulders from behind, she was wearing a dress and a long sleeved jacket. Although it looked very warm, it was better than wearing a shirt in the forest.

She is standing behind him, looking into the forest.

“You may be right——after all I don’t think those guys were lying, you did light a fire underneath them.”

“Got any other snarky remarks?”

Orphen asked. Cleo replied in a silly voice:

“No. Though, even if worst comes to worst, even if the world is your enemy, I will always be by your side.”

“You mean you’ll be by my side for your pocket money.”

Ignoring Cleo’s protests, Orphen closed his eyes and listened to his surroundings. In addition to Cleo’s breathing, the forest was silent——of course it was impossible for a forest to be totally silent, especially at night. Insects.....beasts and footsteps. The sound of moving leaves. Then he heard it, the sounds of a village, as well as the sound of water.

Now——according to Orphen’s feelings——it was only a few hours away.

Orphen opened his eyes. The stars lit up his field of vision——the tall forest stretched onward. Although there was possibly some guards nearby, he estimated that there was probably someone or something stalking them. After a while, they finally reached the village. Orphen took the time to get a good look. There was houses, no horses whatsoever, only a pigsty and a small animal hut. The houses seemed pretty simple, most of them were probably warehouses or small huts converted into housing. In the centre of the village there was a big house, it seemed that’s where the head honcho lived. This big house acted as a church, it had a large steeple on top——the symbol of Kimurakku Church.

“The Dragon.....!”

Orphen whispered.

The symbol of the Fenrir Forest——a sold black giant wolf, it stood there solemnly in front of him. It shined brightly in the starlight, normally it would be as black as night itself.

“This is trouble.”

Orphen said, behind him Cleo asked:

“Why?”

Orphen pointed at the wolf statue on top of the steeple.

“That is a statue of the deep dragon.....that tells us that they have a strong faith in it.”

“Dragon faith? I remember hearing something about that before.”

Cleo pondered for a moment. Orphen sighed, putting his hand on Cleo’s head, then he said:

“I see that you don’t understand.....these people, they see sorcerers as some type of devils and hunt them down whenever they see them.”

Cleo thought for moment longer.

“So you mean those five guys back there were of this faith? You know, calling you the devil isn’t that far from the truth.”

“That’s not what I’m worried about—they have Majic, there’s no telling what they’ll——”

He thought about Cleo for a moment, if they caught either of them they would probably be tortured or worse——death.

This opened up a wound in Orphen’s heart. He might not have much time to rescue Majic. Besides, it may already be too late.

(Damn it.....)

“Hopefully they’ll think he’s just some idiot who got lost in the forest, I’m going to teach him a lesson when he gets back.”

“Last time you made him do a thousand squats, he was miserable and you made him cry.”

“He was crying while doing the squats, you fed him some peaches when I wasn’t looking.”

“I did no such thing.”

Cleo said, then she asked:

“But, Orphen.....why do members of the Dragon Faith hate sorcerers?”

“.....”

Overlooking the village, Orphen silently watched children play. In a low voice he said:

“That’s just how things are, and didn’t you hear what I said before?”

“Ah.....in ancient times, the power of magic was stolen from the gods, right?”

“Yeah.....”

In ancient times——according to the records found by the Dragon Race, thousands of years ago, during the reign of the kingdom of the gods, there was a universal force called “magic” on the continent of the giants. Six races rose up and stole this power from the gods. They are the world’s most dangerous mammals——the Deep Dragon race, the Fairy Dragon race, the Mist Dragon race, the Red Dragon race, the Wheeled Dragon race, and lastly, the War Dragon race.

“To escape the wrath of the gods, the six races fled to this continent.....Kiesaruhima. However, people were sent by the gods to deliver their punishment for stealing the magic. A great battle ensued, and afterwards the Dragon Race chose this place as their habitat. Then our human ancestors arrived on the continent, which dates back three hundred years ago.....”

“Humans acquired magic from the Dragon Race, right? I think you mentioned that before.”

“Yes, the humans and the Dragon race inbred with one another and thus we have the magic users we call sorcerers today.”

He gestured towards the statue.

“Those of the Dragon Faith believe this to be disrespectful behaviour. In fact, in the past, sorcerers were hunted in Alenhatan. This is only one example of the hatred towards us, remember the Killing Doll too.”

“So it’s not about the usage of magic, it’s about those who are descended from the Dragon Race?”

“I guess you could say that, but there’s many underlying reasons for their actions.”

“Maybe their jealous.”

Cleo said. This made Orphen smile, then it disappeared quickly.

“From the beginning, this continent has been dominated by the Dragon Race.”

Cleo pouted.

“I still don’t understand why the Dragon Faith hate sorcerers.”

“Who cares anyway, even I’m not sure.”

Upon hearing this, Cleo slumped her shoulders.

It was currently night—in this summer forest, the temperature was very hot. An intense wave of moisture flew through the forest, quaking all the leaves in its wake.

—Orphen looked into Cleo’s eyes with impunity, both of them moved forward into the night.

From the trees outside the village, to the nearest livestock shed—none of those areas were lit up, they sneaked into the village along the road from the garbage dump.

Cleo wore dark clothes—she wore a dark purple jacket, her sword quietly wrapped around her chest. She thought that this sort of jacket was important, after all it had a coat of arms which was very similar to her families.

Orphen quickly moved through the road, advancing into the depths of the village. Although he didn’t know where they were hiding Majic, he knew the best place to start looking was at the heart of the village.

In the centre of the village there was a few domed buildings—they have chimneys, it seemed they were some sort of factories. He thought that it was suspicious that these buildings were built beside a church, captives were probably not kept in a factory. Torture in a place of worship would be out of place, so that leaves either the basement or the tower, one of two of the places is where Majic should be.

They stopped in the shade of a hut, Orphen said to himself:

“We are in real trouble—it doesn’t look like there’s anyone on watch, I’d normally use magic to open the front entrance but this time it’s different.”

“.....Can’t you just steal the keys off a guard?”

Cleo whispered, she was also hiding in the shadows. Orphen shook his head.

“Getting in there should be simple—but we don’t want to make any noise. I’m going to have to shout in order to open the lock using magic.”

After listening to Orphen, Cleo clenched her fist.

“Okay, that leave us with one choice. You cause a fire with your magic and we’ll charge in and rescue Majic during the confusion.”

“You moron——there’s no way we’ll be able to get in and out without getting caught.”

“I was joking, besides it’s better than nothing.”

“That would wake up the whole village, there’s a high chance we’d get burned alive trying to escape.”

“.....If we need a distraction to get inside then the fire idea is the best option.”

“Fine, but we’ll need a big enough distraction to cause the most confusion.”

“Well, I don’t know.....”

Cleo put a finger to her mouth.

“Orphen.....you could get naked, a laughing mad man running around the village is sure to get their attention.”

“Oh, forget it.”

“Since the whole village is asleep you’ll need a nose ring, that should wake them up.”

“.....Why can’t you be serious for a moment? We have to rescue Majic.”

Orphen sighed.

“Come on, let’s get a move on.”

They marched to the depths of the village, at this point——

Whoosh——

A large volume of compressed air flew by them——

Thud!

In the centre of the village, a huge pillar of fire shot into the sky.

“What the——!”

Orphen was speechless, he covered his face with his hand——behind him Cleo screamed. The blast of wind blew dust everywhere, it whacked the nearby huts creating lots of noise. The pillar of fire never disappeared, in the centre of the village——the chimneys were burning, the village slowly lit up.

(I’m sure of it——that wasn’t a gas explosion.....)

“This is a magical fire.....”

Orphen instinctively shouted out loud. The village was now abuzz with activity, people ran out of their houses to look at the pillar of fire. However, none of them were bothered by Orphen and Cleo.

“Magic? Do you think Majic did this?”

Cleo asked, Orphen retorted:

“Heck, if that guy can use this level of magic then I don’t have anything to teach him.”

“.....Huh?”

“This is.....this isn't human magic!”

Orphen shouted.

“What the hell? Could it be that doll?”

Cleo cried, she readied her sword——Orphen stopped her, and said:

“Stop. Do you have any idea what'll happen?”

“Come on, stop treating me like a child.”

Cleo complained. Right now, Orphen wanted to give him a thump on the head.

“Take a look.”

He pointed towards the pillar of fire. The bright flame was disappearing——then it went out, and the village went dark once again. In the darkness of the night, a vague shadow appeared.

There it was——hundreds of meters from the village centre stood a giant figure. The moonlight was raining down upon it, it was clear as day, it was——a giant wolf.

“The Deep Dragon——Fenrir!”

Orphen trembled as he called out its name. He had heard about the legend of the Deep Dragon, but seeing it in the flesh made a chill run down his spine.

“The Deep Dragon is one of the most powerful races!”

Orphen shouted as he stared at the large figure. The giant wolf was covered in dark hair, if there was no moon tonight it would be surrounded by total darkness.

He wanted to explain to Cleo just how dangerous the Deep Dragon was, however, he knew that there wasn't enough time and that she wouldn't understand.

Orphen was about to grab Cleo by the shoulders. She took a step towards the giant wolf, a mischievous grin appeared on her face.

“Run!”

“.....Huh?”

Everyone in the village was now setting their sights upon the giant wolf. However, no one noticed Orphen and Cleo, there were too preoccupied by the appearance of the Deep Dragon.

Orphen stared into Cleo's eyes.

“I left signs in the forest, can you make your way back to the carriage on your own?”

“What? But——”

“Get to the carriage and alert the authorities. Explain the situation to them and wait for me, understand?”

“A-Alright, but Orphen——”

“Just go! I will try to rescue Majic, I'll meet up with you later!”

“But——”

“Don’t talk nonsense.”

Orphen angrily waved his arm. Cleo looked unhappy, she started to retreat towards the forest. While walking back she thought about the situation.

“Orphen.”

She didn’t forget to leave before getting in the last word.

“Next time it’ll be me who will be commanding you.”

“I’m getting sick of this!”

Standing there, Orphen was sickened.

(Even if I am just a human, it’s going to be very difficult to save lives——)

Orphen was holding his dragon pendant in his hands, he made a gesture which looked like he was praying. To who exactly, no one knows.

(Majic, that moron——and I thought taking care of Cleo was enough.)

He ran to the centre of the village without much trouble, he knew that’s where Majic was being held.

Meanwhile, the Dragon stood there motionlessly. It looked as if it was looking at something——Orphen noted this, it was looking at the tower.

(He may be dead.)

Orphen though as he made his way through the commotion in the village.

The village was no longer dark, lit torches were everywhere. He listened closely, it appeared the appearance of the Deep Dragon didn’t cause mass panic among the villagers.

(This is hardly surprising, the Dragon is their patron saint.....or at least they think so.)

Then——he heard a voice.

“...Is...that...right...?”

“.....?”

Orphen stopped, he began to wonder. Was that a voice in his ears——

(What was that?)

He stood in the shadow of a hut. It couldn’t have been one of the villagers. He looked along the road, he could see villagers out with torches, they hadn’t noticed him. In fact, all of their attention was focused on the giant wolf.

(You won’t find the answer here.....)

Orphen smacked his lips, continuing to run ahead. The villagers were all moving towards the Dragon, people were all around him. It seemed that rescuing Majic was nearly impossible at this point.

(That bastard, I've done so much damage already—I've got to get you back.)

He heard a voice.

"It has only just begun."

This time he heard it clearly.

(—So I'm not delusional!)

Except it wasn't a voice—there was no vibrations in the air, no sound. It was a message communicated directly to his brain.....

(Is this the magic of the Deep Dragon?)

Deep Dragon magic—it's almost the same as the human's white magic, the only difference is that it can also effect things which aren't alive. For example, trees, soil, air, water and so on.

Orphen started to panic.

When using human magic you need to use your voice as a medium. However, Orphen wasn't even within range of the Dragon. Even so, he was still affected by its psychic message.

(Why has the Deep Dragon chosen to appear in this village?)

According to legends, the Deep Dragon has been a guardian of the forest of Fenrir for a long time. Supposedly it aims to rid all humans who enter or live in the forest, within a minute it can destroy a village completely. However, nothing is happening, it's standing still.

(This—is this really the patron saint of the village?)

He repeated the question in his mind, he then turned the corner and suddenly—

"Who are you!?"

That voice made Orphen stop in his tracks. He looked back, a tall man was standing there.

The man was holding a torch in his right hand, in his left hand there was a mace. The bright torch lit up his face, he was bearded and middle-aged.

Behind the man was two other men, the first was most likely another villager or an attendant. The second was different—he was armed, wore a military jacket, and had a smile on his face. He looked to be in his twenties or possibly thirties.

The man holding the mace spoke again, his voice rough yet crisp.

"Who are you? Are you one of the villagers?"

".....Me? I—"

Orphen was ready to say something, but it seemed the men were ready to act—the man with the mace whacked it off the ground.

Meanwhile, the man pulled a black iron object out and put it into his left hand. Orphen jumped backwards, the black object made a loud noise.

“A pistol!”

Orphen screamed. Because it was night time, the bullet missed.

“Great, first a Dragon now a pistol——didn’t the royal family ban that sort of thing?”

Orphen muttered, the armed man smiled——the lower half of his face covered by his beard, his eyes fixed on Orphen.

“Human laws are useless in our forest! We are the Dragons messengers, the heart. I’m their leader, Makudogaru.”

Orphen knew the second shot would probably hit him, he had to act first.

“Sword of light——”

“He’s a sorcerer!”

Makudogaru cried, as more men approached his location. Orphen decided to continue casting the spell.

“Whom I do——”

He clearly intended to cast the spell——but suddenly the incantation was hampered.

“Ahhh——!?”

Orphen felt a sharp pain in his shoulder, he didn’t know when someone stabbed him with a knife. If his arms weren’t raised for the incantation, the knife would have stabbed him in the neck.

He groaned out aloud as the knife was removed.

Bang! The sound of a shot rang out, but it missed. Orphen couldn’t hold back the pain caused by the knife, he lowered his shoulders, ready to cast the spell again——

Then, suddenly someone else attacked him——they took their torch and swung it at him, Orphen was unable to avoid it.

“Damn it——”

Orphen yelled as he fell to the ground. The attendant stepped towards him with murderous intent. Orphen knew he had to make a move right away, he lunged towards him and struck him in the chest. Then chanted:

“I let thou flow, angel's breath”

Suddenly, the air around the men began to swirl. Its pressure intensified and flung the men towards one another, Makudogaru received a direct hit.

(This is it——I’ve got to——rescue Majic——)

At that time——

(What.....?)

Orphen was stunned, he couldn’t move. Right in front of him was the giant wolf, the Deep Dragon.



“Ohhh.....”

He heard Makudogaru exclaim behind him.

“My Lord, the Holy Spirit!”

Orphen repeated what Makudogaru said.

The Dragon.....it was watching them.

The Deep Dragon——legends call it the silent Dragon warrior. Its residence lies within the forest of Fenrir, foolish humans from around the continent came here trying to beat the strongest warrior. Even the King and Queen fear its destructive power, naturally they sent an army to deal with this threat.

It was foolish of them to think that they could win, none of them made it back alive.

Taking a closer look at the black wolf, he could feel its overwhelming power. It had quiet, beautiful, green eyes, they were staring right at him. It was probably just a glance, but it was enough to make a human turn into dust.

It was the continent’s most beautiful beast, the Deep Dragon, Fenrir.

Under the moonlight it’s dark coat gave off a magnificent sight,

“Why.....do you look at me?”

“Aren’t you a human? Your kind always wants things.”

(.....?)

It seemed the Dragon didn’t understand what Orphen said, or that Orphen didn’t understand what the Dragon was saying.

“You protect your own things, yet you want to borrow my power?”

(No——!)

Orphen clenched his fist, ready for anything.

Then, as if darkness was descending upon him——silence.

Chapter 3 – Captured Orphen

It's dark, he's all alone, floating.

He couldn't tell if he was standing or floating—he couldn't feel his body. He seemed to feel something from his fingertips, it was a warm feeling. Then a cold one.

Suddenly his eyes were filled with light—he couldn't see himself, but he could clearly see a figure in front of him. A thin silk dress swaying in the light, it was a little girl.

She suddenly began to speak.

“Are you, Orphen?”

“.....”

He was unable to reply.

“Sorry.....I would like to apologize.”

Her expression became humble. Seeing this, he became a little less tense.

“I'm so sorry, I really am—it's my fault that you were attacked.....”

.....He didn't understand. Was he attacked? He couldn't remember anything—or there was nothing to remember. His name, he didn't know it either. Or he simply didn't want to remember it.

She didn't have an explanation for this.

“You wanted to take Majic back, so the Dragon attacked you.....”

“.....”

“I didn't want him to be taken away. Maybe I was jealous, since he can get other's help.”

She said those words very clearly, but he wasn't so sure what she meant by them.

“But I didn't think the Dragon would make you useless.....”

Dragon—that term left a great impression on him. This feeling, it made him want to run away.

“I will make every effort to heal you. Though it may take some time.”

While she was speaking, the darkness around him gradually became thin.

“Also, don't go against Makudogaru. Don't kill him. He is this villages——”

And then the darkness disappeared into the light, he could hear no more.

(.....What happened?)

(Where am I——?)

(Who am I——?)

(Where is the pain——?)

(What part of my body is breathing——?)

(Damn it.....)

He turned his body. It was a simple action. He felt pain from his left shoulder. He was wounded.

(I can't remember anything.....)

Some things came to mind. A girl appearing in the dark——

He was afraid of something, humble eyes——

He opened his eyes. It was dark at first——then the light came. The light seemed to be coming from behind him. He lay there sideways, his body lying face against the wall. Walls were all around him, it appeared he had slept on the floor. He thought he was in some sort of cave. At that time——

“You're awake, sorcerer.”

That voice.....someone was talking to him. His memory was a little fuzzy, he could vaguely remember the face of which that voice belonged to. The man was known as Makudogaru, he was the leader.

He rolled in the opposite direction.

Something entered his line of sight, it was a pair of shoe's——the shoes of Makudogaru. They were a pair of dirty hiking boots, another pair set not far away, they seemed to be his comrades. Further away amidst the dazzling light, he could see iron bars and a staircase.

It was very clear to him that he was locked in an underground cell. The door to the cell was slightly open, standing in front of him was Makudogaru and another. The glanced upwards at him, his clothes were bloodstained and he had an assortment of weapons.

(Can I stand up?)

He asked himself. He should be able to do it, but for some reason he couldn't.

Makudogaru coldly gazed down upon him.

“Tell me your name, sorcerer.”

“.....”

He didn't answer——or rather he couldn't.

(My first name?)

He remembered something——his mind in chaos, it was like a dream——

Upon getting no reaction, Makudogaru sighed.

“Why do you remain silent?”

“Of course he won't obediently answer our questions.”

The man with the sword said, laughing afterwards.

“You know what, Sarua?”

The man wearing the military jacket was called——Sarua. Orphen remembered this.

“This man is from the *Tower of Fang*. Elite black sorcerers hail from there. Whatever his reasons for coming here, he certainly won’t tell us.”

Makudogaru laughed.

(——The Tower of Fang……)

Orphen was familiar with this word——for he had spent more than half of his life at that place.

Makudogaru continued talking:

“Let him suffer a little bit, maybe that will loosen his tongue.”

“Torture? On a sorcerer? These guys have undergone resistance training.”

Sarua shook his head as he spoke. Slowly, Makudogaru became angry.

“Do you forget who the boss around here is?”

“Of course not.”

Sarua chuckled.

“This is your village——the heart.”

Makudogaru was satisfied hearing this. He nodded, then looked at Orphen.

“I will not only ask about your name. What happened to the other villagers? Did you kill them?”

(Kill?)

That word was absurd to him. He unconsciously exposed a smile.

But this seemed to anger Makudogaru.

“What’s so funny!?”

The leader kicked him in the face. Orphen silently glared back at him, his face red from the impact.

Makudogaru saw his silence as obedience, slowly, with a look of satisfaction on his face, he spoke:

“My name is Makudogaru——you are currently in the holy *great heart*, a sacred place. Me and my men are soldiers who serve a powerful Dragon, we will protect it and our homeland with our lives.”

“.....”

He didn’t respond. Sarua shrugged his shoulders, Makudogaru continued his speech:

“Simply put, you and your apprentice will be executed. I don’t know why members of the Tower of Fang have come here, but you won’t be leaving this place alive.”

(Apprentice?)

He remembered something.

“Now get some rest—we await your recovery. Then you’ll regret coming here.”

Makudogaru grinned at him, then both him and Sarua left the cell. Ensuring that the door was locked, they walked up the staircase.

Orphen used what magic he had to heal his shoulder wound, afterwards he slept. About an hour after his sleep, he recovered all his memory.

“.....Why do you live in a room like this?”

This question made her feel very embarrassed—Fiena looked out the window, she scowled.

(Right now she isn’t a priestess)

Majic came to this conclusion.

She turned. She was wearing ordinary civilian clothes indoors, they were made out of white linen.

“I don’t generally show myself in front of people.”

“Show yourself?”

Majic asked, a self-deprecating smile ran across Feina’s face.

“I am just for show—I unite the people of the village when important ceremonies are held, then.....sometimes miracles happen.”

“Miracles.....like healing people’s wounds?”

Feina didn’t answer. She looked back and forth across the room.

Majic also looked around—he noticed he was in the tower at the centre of the village, it was about ten meters off the ground. However, it wasn’t very spacious. The room was only a handful of steps across. The room had a desk, a small round table, and a simple bed. Majic was lying on top of it.

Majic was wearing girl’s pyjamas, he lay motionlessly on the bed—under the pyjamas was bandages. It seemed the wounds he sustained from Makudogaru hadn’t healed yet, but he felt no pain. According to Fiena, he was ready to stand up and walk, but he was reluctant.

She was looking for something on the table—she picked up a kettle and cup, pouring water and putting it to her mouth.

“Has the wound stopped hurting?”

“Huh? Yeah.....I guess so. However, when I move my body I feel a little muscle cramp.”

“I think that’s because the skin hasn’t connected right. I’m not a doctor, though the magic used was really powerful.”



“Is that right? My master is also strong with magic.....”

Having said that, he thought of himself as a student—he didn’t know whether to regard this as a disadvantage or an advantage in this situation. Majic’s body shook a little, but he quickly put that fear behind him.

“Uhm, why am I dressed like this?”

The girl’s pyjamas he was wearing were too big for him. Feina moved the cup away from her mouth, a smile appeared across her face.

“Because that’s all I had, there was no other way for me to take care of you in my house.”

“Hehehe, I guess so.”

Then, Majic quietly whispered to himself.

(Hopefully I’ll get to see Master and Cleo again.....though I don’t know how things will turn out.....)

Majic thought for a moment, his face turned white.

“Anyway, whose clothes are these?”

Majic asked a question. The answer was simple for Feina.

Suddenly the door opened. Makudogaru entered with a grim look on his face. He attendant Sarua or his bodyguards weren’t with him, he was alone. Upon seeing him, Feina’s body shuddered.

“Are you ready, Feina?”

“What.....do you mean?”

He didn’t know when Feina’s demeanour changed back to the “priestess”——Majic felt this was her defensive posture.

Makudogaru restlessly lifted his face.

“I’ve already told you about it.....soon it will happen.”

“.....I understand.”

Feina whispered.

Makudogaru’s patience was wearing thin, he took a deep breath and said:

“You said the same thing yesterday, and the day before that.”

“I think——”

Majic couldn’t hear her whisper. Though Makudogaru heard it clearly——he stared intently back at her.

“What did you just say?”

“I said.....I.....”

Feina repeated herself softly, but she still couldn’t be heard. Majic watched anxiously as her priestess demeanour collapsed.

Makudogaru took a step forward.

“Six months ago, when you were lost in the woods, I protected you.”

“.....I didn’t get lost.”

She looked down and took a step backwards. Makudogaru quickly raised an eyebrow.

“You didn’t get lost? Then what were you doing?”

“I was looking for something.”

“Looking.....for what?”

Feina’s voice was trembling.

“Looking...for you.

Hearing this, Makudogaru exposed a look of surprise.

“So you had a guide, didn’t you?”

“.....”

Feina didn’t answer. Makudogaru took another step forward.

“You are indispensable for our plans, it would be impossible without you. We thank you.”

He shrugged.

“But we need a response, don’t we? You have the power, Feina.”

“The power.....that sort of thing.....”

Feina was hesitant. Makudogaru interrupted her:

“Indeed, you have the power——right? Because you can use Dragon magic.”

(.....What?)

This was too much for Majic, he mind suddenly went blank.

Makudogaru continued:

“Use your power to find the *heart* of the forest. Only you can do this, Feina.”

“I.....”

Feina continued to mumble. Makudogaru violently grabbed her by the chest.

“You know better than this. I spared that boy for you——that should be enough.”

Makudogaru pointed at Majic. Majic felt scared, he couldn’t move his body.

Makudogaru continued talking:

“If you want a breath of fresh air, open a window——if you want earth under your feet, you are allowed to walk in the forest for three days! And yet you refuse to help me! Kindness should be repaid with kindness!”

“You’ve said enough.”

Majic said, he then took a deep breath, and cried:

“No!”

He used that as an incantation, and released magic. In an instant, Makudogaru was lifted off the floor and flung across the room. Feina watched in amazement as Makudogaru hit the round table. Majic got up from the bed, his wound was still not fully healed, so he moved slowly.

“You bastard sorcerer——”

Makudogaru uttered. His face grim and tired. Majic generally wasn’t used to fighting, but right now he was ready for anything.

“Majic!?”

Behind him the girl cried. Majic quietly said something:

“Sorry, I won’t be able to chant incantations fast enough. Short ones will have to do.”

Makudogaru smiled, he put something in his left hand.

“Oh——so you know how to use it?”

“Yes. My master taught me. And Royal Law prohibits the manufacture and possession of such a thing. Why do you have it?”

“I.....”

Makudogaru stood up.

“If I want something, I get it. Just like how someday I’ll accept the goddess’ greeting.”

(Goddess...?)

Majic was surprised.

“You mean the three goddess’ of fate that the Kimurakku church worship, right?”

“In a way, yes——but the goddess give us strength, not ignorance, sorcerer.”

Makudogaru gestured towards his pistol.

“You and your magic cannot hope to match this power. In the *heart* of the forest.....”

“.....Uh.....”

Majic groaned. Makudogaru gradually reached for his pistol.

(If this guy really uses his gun——)

A cold sweat went down Majic’s spine.

(I’ve got to kill him before he kills me. But——)

To Majic the exact thought of killing someone was beyond his imagination. He’s never killed, not even in his dreams. In fact, he never thought it would be necessary.

Makudogaru continued to speak. His eyes burning with fire.

“This is a necessary weapon, it protects the village, and more...Feina.”

“Feina is not your possession.”

Majic cried, waving his hand into the air. At the same time, Makudogaru grabbed his pistol faster than expected.

“Sword of light——”

Majic tried to shout, he was stunned. He was unable to release magic.

(It failed!)

Makudogaru pointed the gun directly at his forehead.

(I'm going to die!)

Makudogaru didn't fire, he just stood there motionlessly. He wore a cold expression on his face.

“You did this.....Feina.”

“.....I did.”

Behind Majic, Feina answered. This angered Makudogaru, he said:

“I can't move my arm.....release your hold on me.”

“I'll do it as long as you don't kill magic?”

(Is this mental domination?)

Majic looked at her. He remembered what his master Orphen had told him, only white sorcerers could use mental domination. But even so, he didn't hear Feina utter an incantation.

(This isn't human magic.)

Makudogaru's arm went down to his sides. He took a deep breath, and put the pistol back in its holster.

“It's happening the day after tomorrow, be ready for it.”

Upon hearing this, Feina was shocked. Majic didn't know what they were talking about, he remained silent. Makudogaru went to exit the room.

“Wait a second——”

She wanted to stop him. Makudogaru slammed the door shut in her face.

The room fell silent, Majic leaned against the bed. He was exhausted. He looked at Feina and asked:

“What's the plan?”

“.....”

She didn't answer. Majic slowly stood up.

“.....Where are they clothes I came here with?”

“Do you want to leave the village?”

Feina’s eyes became restless.

“Of course not.”

Majic didn’t know why he said this, he wanted to be back with his friends.

“At least not now. That guy Makudogaru is dangerous, we’ve got to take action.”

“Action?”

She was puzzled. Majic suddenly went silent, he then said:

“Why do you ask? Of course I want to escape from here.”

“But——”

“Master is probably looking for me as we speak, he’s probably worried sick.”

“That guy.....”

“He’s awesome, I bet my master could turn Makudogaru into dog food.”

“I’m sorry, I forgot to mention this.”

“Huh?”

Feina spoke in a low tone:

“That man you speak of was caught.”

“What the hell, ahhhh!”

“.....Don’t yell, you’re giving me a headache.”

Orphen muttered. He lay in the dirty dungeon, his head felt like a bunch of bees were buzzing around it. He didn’t want to move much, or else the hangover would worsen. The wound on his left shoulder still hadn’t healed fully, if he tried moving it too much he might collapse from the pain.

Though the pain would help refresh his memory. Even with the pain he just wanted to forget everything, hoping his mind would drift off and end up somewhere else. Orphen recalled this though.

(What a load of shit.)

Standing in front of his cell were two guards and two others. Majic listened to the girl speaking for a moment, then they left.

At the same time, Orphen wondered if this was a dream. The girl appeared again.

“He was apprehended, he also can’t move much.”

Majic grabbed the iron bars. His apprentice had a couple holes in his shirt, there were traces of blood stains that were obviously cleaned.

"It's a miracle that you're alive. You survived an attack by the Deep Dragon."

He wanted to say more, but he could feel Feina's body tremble—he thought it was all an illusion. In this state, there was a chance the illusions could get worse. Majic went on to say:

"I'm glad that you are alive, but there's something you've got to know——"

"Ah, shut up. Are you here to rescue me or not?"

"Listen, in about a day something big is going to happen."

Feina tugged at Majic's sleeve, he looked backwards, thinking for a moment.

"Uh...oh, Feina's going to do a little favour for us, but——"

(This kid, he's so excited in front of that girl.)

Orphen thought.

"I'm going to have to work on my own. Anyway, how are your injuries?"

"I've been better, still suffering from that mental attack. But how are you getting me out of?"

"Just leave it up to me."

"That's a relief."

The sarcasm was obvious. He then looked closer at the girl.

"You are the one called Feina, correct? I have something to ask you."

"O-Okay."

The little girl stuttered—she was afraid to look him in the eye, her eyes were pointed downwards.

"This underground cell is connected to the tower and the village. Next to the tower is a large building, what's inside it?"

"Uhm..."

The girl went silent. Perhaps she was forbidden to speak of it—or didn't want to, this was obvious to Orphen.

He decided to ask about something else.

".....About yesterday. That Dragon appeared in the middle of the village.....why was that?"

"W-What do you mean?"

She said, still avoiding eye contact. Orphen sighed.

"The Deep Dragon is the guardian of the forest—it's said in legends that it wipes out human villages it comes across in this forest in the blink of an eye, but it didn't attack anyone—Also, is it really the patron saint of this village?"

"....."

"It's fine if you don't want to answer—but could you at least tell us why we were attacked upon entering this forest."

".....It's because you are a sorcerer. We were notified by two small people that you would be arriving."

"Those darn raccoon dogs.....they are always giving me trouble."

For the next while they traded stories about what happened, Majic mentioned Makudogaru's pistol and Feina's magic.

Orphen said softly:

"Feina?"

".....W-What?"

She looked at him. Orphen was brief.

"Thanks for the treatment, you saved my life."

"That was nothing....."

"You treated master?"

Majic asked. Orphen didn't want to hear Feina tell him the entire story, he cut to the chase:

"I'm not entirely sure, it was like——my spirit has been destroyed——she helped bring my humanity back."

"That's right."

Feina said positively.

"That's some power you wield, tell me more about it."

"....."

She didn't answer. Her hands moved to her chest, she glanced over at Majic. It seemed she was accustomed to look to others for support.

"I asked a question, don't look at him——answer."

"Master, this isn't an interrogation——"

Majic protested.

"I'll answer. I'll.....I'll....."

Her voice was getting smaller and smaller.

"You must obviously wield a strong force, what are you afraid of?"

"....."

Feina didn't answer. It looked like she had become the priestess once again.

Chapter 4 - Feina's Request

Night soon fell. It was dark, the stairs in the tower were difficult to climb—he couldn't help but think that at least the stairs weren't shabby. However—he didn't expect it to be so tall. They were on the frontier, in the unexplored depths of a small village, this place must have had a decent designer. Makudogaru probably got him from Alenhatan City, that designer must have built the whole village, including the church and the factory.

Nevertheless, it was very difficult to climb the stairs. As the steep stairs were covered with straight pieces wood. Did the designer have this in mind when designing the staircase?

(This is very different from my hometown.)

In the darkness, he leg hit the edge of the stairs, Sarua smiled. His faint beard forming an iconic expression. The sword by his waist making a rattling sound.

(After all, when you leave your hometown.....that's when the fun and interesting things begin.)

He continued to climb up the stairs, the tower only had one room. Ordinary villagers were prohibited from entering that room by Makudogaru—it was the priestess' room. The key to the room was personally carried by Makudogaru, he never opens the door unless Feina makes a sound.

However, it was Sarua knocking on her door this time, he lowered his voice, and said:

"It's me——Sarua."

After a while, the door opened. Feina appeared wearing a toga, she murmured:

"Is there something.....you want?"

"Excuse me, I haven't come to talk——nor to bring you refreshments. However, this time you may need to do something. And that kid——"

He then looked around the room, Sarua paused for a moment. He looked left and right across the room, then said:

"Where's the kid?"

"Majic.....he went to the underground cell since Makudogaru hates sorcerers."

"Ah...I see. But don't you want to see what Makudogaru will be doing to him?"

Having said that, Sarua quickly turned to leave. Then——behind him Feina said:

"Wait....."

".....Huh?"

Sarua turned around. He saw Feina's eye lashes blink, she meekly said:

"For some reason I lay awake during the night, I don't know why. I can't sleep....."

".....Are you referring to that plan?"

Sarua casually said, Feina looked at him in dismay.

“Oh, why would you know? Makudogaru hasn’t yet——”

“Not to say I haven’t learned anything from my own investigation. It will happen the day after tomorrow, you and Makudogaru will be leaving the village. Only the woman and non-combatants will remain in the village.”

“In the end, you.....”

What was he going to say? These words were stuck in her throat, she didn’t dare to say them.

Sarua revealed a wry smile.

“Anyway, you do realize that Makudogaru’s plan will succeed?”

“.....Yes.”

The girl sighed afterwards.

“I can’t stand it——the village will perish and all of us along with it, day after day I’ve looked for a way to escape...but it’s not that simple. Say, if you don’t want to die, will you escape with me?”

“...I-I want to die...but I’m afraid...”

His voice was lifeless. Feina was afraid——then she closed her eyes, she began to cry.

Sarua sighed.

“I know I’m not a nice guy, but I’ll do my best to protect you. However, if you want happiness...it comes with a price——you can’t get close to someone, and you mustn’t cry.”

Then, he sighed again. He didn’t like preaching.

(Damn it——I hate this place, I can’t stand this frontier task I’ve been given.)

Sarua turned towards the door. He didn’t hear a response from Feina, she was still crying.

“Bye, I’ll try my best, until that day...don’t cry.”

He went straight down the narrow staircase.

“You came again, didn’t you?”

He heard a different tone of voice, he quickly looked up the stairs. Feina had stopped crying, she was currently the priestess.

“Yes.....”

(.....?)

Sarua felt very strange in the darkness. He heard weird sounds coming from Feina’s room——
—

(This is an illusion——isn’t it? No——)

He thought it was best to not think about it, he quickly went down the stairs.

“Ahhhhhh!”

Sarua heard screaming. It came from the entrance.

It seemed someone was getting tortured——Sarua thought for a moment, had the interrogation really begun?

“Ahhhhhh!”

There was more screaming. He couldn't see the usual guard waiting at the dungeons entrance, Sarua summarised that the guard was being briefed about the ceremony. He was waiting for a moment like this.

“Well...”

Sarua went down the stairs.

A strange odour filled the air. He tried to hold his breath as he descended the stairs.

Then, as he finally reached the cell, his mouth fell open.

“Ahhhhh!”

He screamed. Meanwhile, with great speed the iron bars of the prison cell pierced the wall——it missed his head by a few centimetres.

“Ah, my ears, asshole!”

A little man yelled——it was Vulcan. Dortin was also there, except it seemed he had fainted.

Across from the two small men lay Orphen, his face was slumped against the wall.

The Black Sorcerer lazily said:

“Ah.....it seems my headache is getting better.”

“You better be serious!”

Vulcan lamented.

(These people, what's going on?)

Sarua scratched his head as he thought——why were the two who gave us the information on the sorcerer here? He summarised that they must be working with him.

The black sorcerer weakly laughed on the ground.

“I'm not joking, Vulcan. I'm always serious——”

He was hard to believe from his tone.

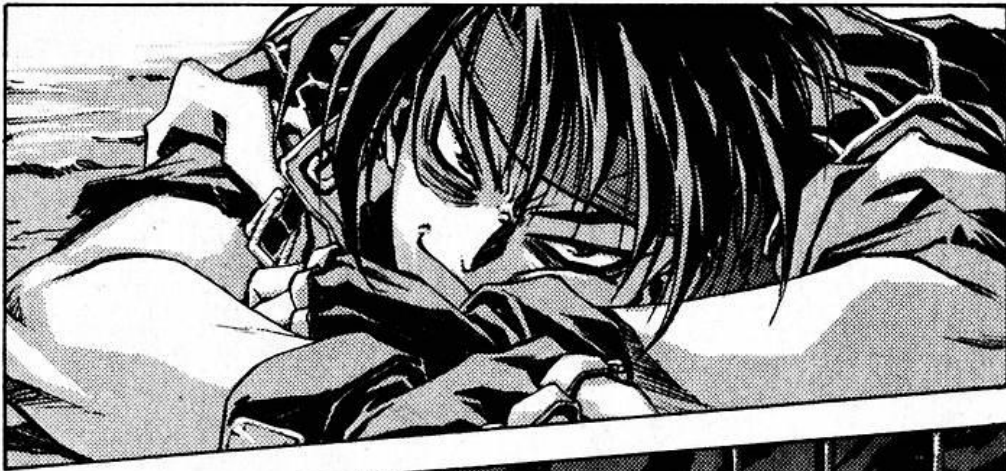
“Return.”

This sentence was a mantra——he used it to pull an iron bar from the wall, it came out easily. It flew through the air and stopped right in front of him.

Evidently, he was using magic to control the iron bars. Since he was lying on the ground, it hindered his aim.

“...Master!”

A voice suddenly said. It was his student, Majic——he was quietly standing there, with a stiff smile on his face.



Majic said:

“It was a pure waste wasting all that physical energy.....”

“That’s rich! A student preaching to his master on how to be a sorcerer! Give me a break!”

The black sorcerer calmed down, his cell was much more quiet now—even the rowdy Vulcan sat in silence. The black sorcerer closed his eyes, he sighed:

“It’s good to see you again.”

“You too.”

“Hey, hey!”

Vulcan cried.

“Maybe you are forgetting something, you almost hit us with those iron bars! Don’t make me kill you!”

Vulcan’s mad tears flowed violently, the black sorcerer slowly turned his head towards him, and said:

“.....Cry me a river, actually you might just end up doing that.”

“Master, I don’t think that’s physically possible.”

“You don’t even show the slightest compassion for me!”

Vulcan cried, the black sorcerer raised his head, and shouted:

“Compassion? You are a stupid raccoon dog! I’ve been rooting away in here and you talk of compassion! What comes around goes around!”

“You no good loan shark! No matter how many injuries I suffer you still treat me like a cockroach, you don’t care about me! I’ll dye your hair and watch you die from the flamboyant colours!”

“That’s because you are a cockroach!”

Vulcan instantly busted into tears. Sarua continued to watch in amazement, but he knew it was time to make them aware of his presence.

“Hey.....”

“Help me, brother! I didn’t do anything wrong, the sorcerer tricked me! He’s the one to blame, kill him now before he attacks!”

The black sorcerer frowned.

“...Is that so?”

“He kills people for pleasure!”

“Well.....”

Sarua looked down upon the black sorcerer.

“The name’s Orphen.”

“Huh?”

Sarua smiled. He squatted down beside Orphen, he reached towards his dragon pendant.

“A dragon wrapped around a sword, the emblem of the *Tower of Fang*. This says a lot about you, Orphen...”

Orphen shook his face for a moment—as the owner of the pendant, he knew this. Engraved on the back of it was the word *Krylancelo*.

Sarua shrugged, he put the pendant back in place.

(Childman’s *successor*.....Krylancelo)

The strongest human in history was Childman—he recognized the seventh student from Childman’s class as his successor. He had heard of his disappearance five years ago, he never thought he’d meet him in a place like this.

Just knowing this——

“Hmm...”

Sarua immediately took out a switchblade from a pocket in his army jacket, he snapped the blade open. Majic nervously grunted.

“You, what are you doing?”

He quickly got up and lunged towards him——

(He really is a novice.)

Majic tried to ward him off, but Sarua crushed his head against the wall. Vulcan cheered loudly.

“Brother, you have chosen to help me!”

Sarua darted back towards Orphen in an instant, he thrust the blade towards his neck.

(Krylancelo’s legend ends today!)

The knife stabbed the ground. Orphen was no longer there.

He raised his head——Orphen was standing next to him. Although his face was pale, he looked well awake.

“Your body can’t move.....this must be a trick!”

Sarua said, Orphen calmly replied:

“You fool, I’ve been resting the entire day.”

“You little shit.....”

Sarua grinned, he quickly pulled the knife out from the ground——sending it towards Orphen, he easily dodged it. It pierced Vulcan’s head.

“Ahhhhhhh!”

——His scream rang out——

Orphen knew he couldn’t resort to using magic, for it he did it would leave him open to attack. Thus, Sarua began his assault.

Orphen was able to deflect most of the initial attacks, leaving only his head and elbow grazed. But Sarua's leg sweep was what knocked the black sorcerer to the ground.

(This guy——Krylancelo isn't worthy at all!)

Sarua cheered himself on, the thrill of the fight kept him alert.

Although this didn't stop Orphen from getting up and landing a punch on Sarua's face, though he was used to this sort of thing, he instantly hit back——hitting Orphen in the right eye, Orphen's eye closed due to a conditioned reflex. There wasn't any other choice, it was a fist fight now.

Both of them continued to dodge and land blows on one another, Orphen dodging more than attacking.

Whack!

Orphen saw an opening and took it, knocking Sarua on his backside.

Getting back up, Sarua did the unthinkable. He grabbed his sword.

He was about to draw it, at that time——

Orphen stood in front of him, his right hand raised. He was prepared to use magic.

"Don't do such a dangerous thing....."

Sarua said, as his hands moved away from his sword. Orphen also lowered his right hand.

"Now I'm unarmed."

Sarua said as he looked into the cell——Vulcan fainted, it seemed Dortin would never wake up. Majic had also been knocked concussion from the concussion.

".....Well, they are all asleep."

Orphen was watching him like a snake.

"Aren't you excited——you know your teachers dead, right?"

Upon hearing his words, Orphen's eyes narrowed.

He whispered.

"Anyone who doesn't comply with the Kimurakku church's orders are eliminated, that includes your teacher."

Then, Sarua pulled out his sword. A crisp sound rippled through the air, the blade appeared to be in the dark, it was invisible——

"My teacher, dead....."

Orphen said slowly. Sarua held his sword, there was no handle on the blade——or rather he couldn't see it. It looked like it was made from special reflective glass. You could barely see the outline of the blade, it would be extremely difficult to see if the blade was swung very fast. If he was stabbed even once, escape would be impossible. A sword like this was a symbol of an assassin from the Kimurakku Church.

Sarua jokingly said:

"To be honest, if my opponent is the "successor of razor edge "——the Iron successor, then I would want him to have a more decent weapon....."

"....."

Orphen remained silent. He raised his left arm——if anything went wrong, he would use his right arm instead. The black sorcerer's injuries were not severe, but if he pushed himself too much he could cause irreparable damage to his nerves.

Sarua held his sword tightly, he took a step forward.

"What's all this talk about the death of my teacher?"

"Why does Krylancelo of the Tower of Fang come here?"

Orphen took a deep breath, he wasn't afraid.

He stared at his opponent in silence——the black sorcerer was tense and alert, his black eyes following Sarua's every move.

He had a look of impatience on his face.

Sarua tipped the blade in his hand. Then——

"This is your end!"

Behind him came a childish roar. Shortly afterward, a dull sound, his brain had been hit, Sarua slumped to the ground.

"Woah....."

He groaned, Orphen put a hand on his forehead, he looked down upon the assassin lying at his feet. Blood flowed from where Sarua lay on the floor, but he wasn't screaming——

"Ahhh!?"

After a shrill cry, the sword clattered off the ground. The blade splashed in the puddle of blood, the sword master——a delicate blonde girl——she loudly said:

"Oh, you're bleeding!"

Nonsense, Orphen said to himself.

"Now, listen."

He extended a finger.

"Where did you go to, how did you get here?"

"From the other entrance.....I sneaked inside."

Cleo pointed to the stairs behind her.

"Sneaked, listen....."

It appeared Sarua didn't notice her when he was fighting Orphen.

“The soldiers that I got to help are waiting outside the village, I rushed on over here ahead of them.”

“And what the hell are they waiting for? You should have just brought them with you!”

“You are so ungrateful!”

Cleo shouted.

“Hmph.....not that I expect you to be grateful anyway.”

After they were done, Orphen looked around the dungeon. It was a tiny cell with six people in it. Vulcan and Dorton were clumped together against the wall, both were still knocked out. Majic was still unconscious from the blow he received from Sarua, who was still lying on the floor.

“Thanks.....I didn’t expect you to come back so fast.....I’d be lost without you.”

Upon hearing this, Cleo’s eyes lit up.

“Exactly, that goes without saying. Without me, things would only get worse!”

“Sure it would.....”

He put it bluntly, Cleo was speechless. Orphen continued to mouth off:

“Exactly, you’d be there to shield me against an assassin attacking from the darkness. Yes, you’d make a good meat shield. Otherwise I would probably be killed.”

He said as he walked towards Sarua’s body.

“We are in a crisis...this isn’t the time to make jokes...”

“.....”

Orphen listened, once again he looked into the cell.

“Hurry, heal him.”

He squatted above the body of Sarua, he saw blood leaking out from the back of his head. Even though he was bleeding a lot, he didn’t seem to have a skull fracture.

Orphen was about to begin the incantation, but he stopped.

“.....”

He raised his head, Cleo noticed this, she turned to look at what he saw. Behind her——on the stairs, stood a figure. A torch swayed gently down the stairs, it was a young girl wearing a silk dress.

“Feina.....”

Orphen said softly. But something didn’t seem quite right, the girl in front of him was giving off unearthly vibes.

“Who is it?”

Cleo asked. Orphen replied:

“That the priestess of this village.....”

“Oh.....”

Cleo looked at Feina.

“That’s such a cute dress, can I touch it?”

Feina ignored Cleo. She walked directly towards Sarua’s body, she reached out to his wounds.

She uttered no incantation—the assassin’s wounds were healed instantly.

Feina continued to stay in place, she looked towards Majic. Majic was still knocked out, he breathing indicated he was having a calm sleep. She also looked towards other places in the room—a moment later, Vulcan and Dortin’s wounds had healed. The knife fell from Vulcan’s head, it made a clanging noise as it hit the ground.

The wounds healed, but no one woke up—the healing process must have had some kind of hypnotic effect. In order for them to recover from their wounds, they had to sleep through it.

Orphen thought. Just as he was done, Feina turned to him.

“You.....”

She said, but she suddenly stopped talking. At her side with a satisfied expression was Cleo, she was eagerly awaiting approval.

“Go ahead...you can touch it.”

“Awesome!”

Cleo recklessly began to touch Feina’s clothes.

Orphen sighed, he said:

“I never can tell what you’re about to do.....”

“Hmph.”

Cleo stared towards him. Orphen pretended she didn’t. He picked up her sword and began to wipe the blood off with a handkerchief. He then handed it to her.

“Cleo, listen to me——”

“Wait. Stop.”

Cleo hushed him with her hand. She put the sword back in its sheath, and said:

“I know that you are going to tell me to go somewhere safe.”

“Because it’s necessary, go outside the village and stay with the soldiers.”

“You can’t expect me to leave you here, I’m your partner, remember?”

“I know. But I need you to secure the escape route.”

Orphen held Feina’s shoulder and prepared to leave the room. Cleo hastily said:

“Ah——right! I’ll secure the escape route!”

“Great, proper partners share responsibility.”

Orphen said proudly. However, Cleo made a disapproving sound.

“Orphen, do you hate me?”

“Of course not, but you’d just be getting in the way.”

“I see.....”

A cheeky look appeared on Cleo’s face, she marched right in front of Feina’s face——she got so close the tip of their noses almost touched.

(In the way, am I?)

Cleo thought. Both of them stared into each other’s eyes, neither of them blinked. It was a stalemate. After a while, Cleo gave up.

“Okay.....I’ll do as you say.”

After saying goodbye, Cleo climbed the stairs and left. Orphen listened to the sound of her footsteps, Feina then said:

“Are you a sorcerer?”

“Yes.....there isn’t much time. Please excuse me.....”

Orphen looked into her cowardly eyes. Orphen scratched his head and said:

“We’ve got to get out of here, all of us.”

“Tomorrow morning...”

Then, she clenched her fist, and said:

“Please come...”

Orphen looked at Feina, her face suddenly turned into that of a priestess.

(Cleo’s face could never be like this...)

Feina’s request was very simple.

“Before tomorrow morning, please come as soon as possible and escape the village——bring Sarua, and Majic.”

Such a thing couldn’t be easier. With Cleo guarding the rear with the soldiers, they could easily escape with little damage to the village. Unless the girl was planning on bringing the magical dragon with her, anything was possible...

“But...”

Feina shook her head.

“I won’t be going...I will be staying here.”

Upon hearing this, Orphen was shocked.

“...I...hope you can understand my heart?”

“But if you stay here Makudogaru will use you for whatever he’s planning!”

“I know. But...”

Feina's voice was getting weaker, he could barely hear her. Orphen rubbed his head, and said:

"Seems like you have some inside information.....but, no matter what, peace won't reign over the entire continent as long as this dark magic is used."

"I know..."

Feina murmured, she slowly knelt beside Sarua, and began brushing the dust off him.

"Do you know who he is?"

"I know."

Orphen said without the slightest hesitation.

"He's an assassin from the Kimurakku church, he's dangerous. There are only eight glass swords on the continent and he has one of them, he can't be trusted."

He looked at the invisible sword on the ground——Feina also looked at it.

"I know, I heard what he said. But he spoke them like drunken words, I'm unsure if he was telling the truth."

Then, her eyes moved from the assassin's sword to his face. Orphen tracked her eyes——he compared her actions to that of Cleo, though their ages were different, Feina seemed more mature and concerned about others. Orphen then thought about something else.

(Majic, I think she's in love with him.)

Obviously, Feina knew he was thinking this.

"Do you know why he's here?"

"He's here for a purpose, like me."

Feina sighed.

"I knew a sorcerer was in the area.....since you were close to the village, I pretended to take a walk.....that's how I met Majic."

"You never answered the question, why is he here?"

Orphen asked. Feina stared at Sarua's unconscious body, and said:

"Makudogaru needed an assassin. Until a few years ago, he was a teacher in the Kimurakku church."

"The Kimurakku church headquarters....."

In the north of the continent——the church rules the entire continent from this location. Their power and influence is only second to that of the King. The church hates sorcerers, it's widely known that they employ assassins to get rid of those who interfere with their activities, or those who are deemed too powerful. One day Orphen witnessed an assassination attempt on Childman's life, he was sitting in the library, then an assassin disguised as a guest tried to kill him. He was defeated almost instantly, it wasn't so easy to kill a sorcerer.

"Is Makudogaru also from the Kimurakku church? How did a member of the dragon faith end up here?"

“.....”

Upon hearing this, Feina's face stiffened.

“The Kimurakku church.....”

“Go on...”

“I don't know!”

She shouted. Orphen was surprised by this, Feina started blushing.

“I'm sorry...this is just too much...”

“It's alright.”

Orphen coughed.

“Makudogaru's purpose.....”

Feina stalled, she was slightly hesitant to continue.

“You don't know the reason he's here, do you? This village was originally created as a retreat for members of the Dragon Faith. The ancestors from that original village have scattered themselves all over the forest.....he came to this village three years ago, he brought with him specialists from Kimurakku, they built the tower and the factory that builds pistols.”

“Manufacturing pistols.....that's a secret held dear by the King. Only members of the Kings army are allowed to wear pistols.”

“Makudogaru took a pistol from one of the Kings knights, afterwards they successfully created their own——according to Sarua, Kimurakku has been secretly developing them for a while. When Makudogaru brought the pistol to the village, he was regarded as a hero.”

“And then?”

Orphen urged her to continue. The manufacturing of pistols is a great feat, though studying them in secret is one thing, creating more of them is a great threat.

“But Makudogaru never intended to become the village's leader. Ever since he arrived the Dragon Faith has become more active, though this isn't surprising considering.....”

Feina closed her eyes.

“He announced the pistols were going to be used to combat sorcerers, but he needed more powerful weapons.....in order to get them, he travelled to the centre of the forest, the *Great Heart*.”

“Did he know the Dragon existed in the depths of the forest?”

Orphen asked. In the past, humans stayed clear of the centre of the forest, for they knew about the sacred guardian's carnage.

“He knew.....he was desperate to find the Dragon. Then...I came to this village.”

“He wants to use your magic and the Dragon?”

“Yes.”

“Dummy.”

Orphen couldn't help but say this—Feina was really able to use the Dragon Race's magic. But even so, she didn't seem more skilled than the Dragon. Take the night the Giant Wolf appeared in the village—compare the use of the magic words to Feina, she clumsily used them, it was as if she was borrowing the power from somewhere else.

If that confrontation with the Dragon was real, it would have instantly obliterated everything. Simply put, the magic used by the Dragon cannot be measured on the human scale.

These things seemed clear enough.

A glum expression appeared in her eyes—

"That's right.....I'm stupid. I wouldn't normally do such a thing. They forced me to do it....."

Feina then violently shook her head.

"I've...dug my own grave."

"Grave?"

But Feina didn't answer his questions. She went on to say:

"Tomorrow, this village will be destroyed, the facts can't be changed. So.....you'll escape. Bring Sarua and Majic with you."

Orphen looked straight into her tear filled eyes, he thought she would have been strong when the end came.

She went on to say:

"Sarua was the only one who tried to be my friend. Even though he wasn't very religious, he did talk to me once in a while. This made me happy—but I've always been alone."

The feeling of loneliness. Orphen knew this feeling at the *Tower of Fang* since he was an Orphan, it was a fierce competition, and sincere friendship was nowhere to be found. However, now he has someone he can talk to, have a heart-to-heart, his partner. Now—

(I've sent my partner away, now I'm with a friend. Can't say which one is better, but at least I'm not alone.....)

"I refuse!"

Orphen proclaimed. Feina's face was full of surprise.

"I cannot agree to your request. I'm not going to let you stay in this village if it's going to be destroyed."

"But.....I....."

Feina was extremely confused. Orphen got close to the girl, seizing her arms.

"It hurts....."

Feina couldn't help but emit a small groan. Regardless of this, Orphen said:

"Listen—how could I leave a girl like you alone in this village knowing what will happen?"

After that, he let go. Feina rubbed her arms, she stared at him. Orphen couldn't believe this girl has several times more magic power than him, he could only sigh.

(Every time, it's trouble with a woman!)

But he had no time to consider the issue, dawn was coming.

Feina left, first to wake up was Sarua. Orphen didn't know how long the extreme fatigue lasted, or the effect of Feina's magic, he just silently put the glass sword back in its scabbard. He grabbed the unconscious Vulcan and Dortin, bringing them back to the servant's room in Makudogaru residence.

"I'll deal with Makudogaru."

"I saw that your name was Krylancelo, I'll remember that."

"Why did you attack me?"

"Well——"

With a self-deprecating smile, he said:

"Because it was more fun that way."

After a while, Majic still didn't wake up, he figured it would take longer for him. Now all they had to do was wait for their moment, wait until dawn.

Chapter 5 – Makudogaru's Secret

It was very early in the morning. Orphen was taking a walk in the village. He no longer had a headache, after he left the dungeon he went outside the tower and beat up two guards. Although it was dawn, it seemed the village had woken up very early—most of the villagers had already woken up and left. Orphen walked together with them.

Middle-aged women, children, working men, tall and weak girls—stop—he wasn't going to examine every villager. The young men of the village basically blended into the crowd. Sarua mentioned this to him, the energetic guy who was Makudogaru's attendant.

The members of the Dragon Faith were wary of the sorcerer—unfriendly eyes were cast upon him. Moreover, he was wearing black clothes and the dragon pendant, the symbol of the Tower of Fang. He was lucky the crowd didn't start hurling stones at him, at least now yet anyway.

(Fear, they are afraid of me——)

Orphen became aware of this as he walked. From his point of view, it was impossible to stay hidden.

(Why should they be afraid, shouldn't Makudogaru be the one who's afraid?)

Orphen felt weird as he walked. His destination was the south of the Tower——Makudogaru's estate.

When he casted his eyes upon the house, he knew the ancestors who lived here didn't have any kind of luxuries, it was a simple dwelling—most of the houses in this area were, it was like any other house, it had a small garden, and a small flower bed in front of the entrance. He looked at the shape and number of windows on the house, it was as common house. Except almost all of the walls were made with bare wood.

He didn't bother knocking—there wasn't any doorbell anyway—he placed his hand on the doorknob. Since it was dawn, it was naturally locked, though he knew think it was odd that the others were awake but the owner was not.

Finally he saw the difference between him and the ordinary villagers, Orphen was unconsciously relieved.

He raised his right hand and seized the opportunity—instead of knocking on the door he hit it directly with his hand——

Suddenly it sounded as if the door was being unlocked, it squeaked as the timber was removed, the door opened. A voice said:

"Hey. It's really early.....some of the others of Feina should have already told you."

At the door was Sarua. He was wearing the same clothes from last night, but no sword. He didn't look tired, he went on to say:

"The Monsignor is still asleep—he had a late meeting last night."

"I came to wake him up."

Orphen was done talking, he moved past Sarua and entered the house.

When he passed Sarua, he lowered his voice.

"What are you doing, kid?"

"You know what—he has someplace to be. Listen, Feina said that today the village was going to be destroyed, I've got to let him make the first move."

"What are you thinking, do you want to get him now? Let the guy run away first, then take action. I won't notice a thing—take my advice."

"I don't care. I won't do something just because an assassin wants it. Let me open his eyes."

The place was a mess—he was in between the porch and the hallway. Orphen went to open the first door—it seemed to be the reception room, it was very dirty. The floor was littered with bottles, in the opposite corner was a heap of clothes waiting to be washed—it seemed this was a place where certain men spent the night, it had been turned completely upside down.

After he entered the room, Sarua also entered.

".....Did a pack of wild boar run through here?" Orphen asked. Sarua chuckled twice, and said:

"Well, this is the aftermath of our first meeting. Though.....the bottles were drunk rather quickly, the first-class wine too."

"Must have been some party?"

Orphen said as he picked up an empty bottle that Sarua had kicked. Sarua shut the door, he sighed and said:

"Where is Makudogaru?"

"In the bedroom obviously.....however, do you want to see the other men?"

"Of course I do. Anyway, where are they?"

"They should be home by now. The meeting continued until dawn, when morning arrived they left."

"Oh....."

Orphen then went back into the hallway. He heard a panicked voice.

"Hey, hey, who is talking out there? What do you want?"

Orphen didn't respond. He spotted a door opening.

Scattered all over the floor were books and pieces of paper, it seemed they weren't being read, but simply thrown onto the floor. From the entrance to the bed, a long line of clothing was hung up, shirts, pants, socks, and even some summer clothes like skirts and sweaters. He couldn't understand why they were ordered like that. There was a gas lamp on the bed that was very dangerous, it could easily burn the place down if knocked over. The bed sheets were crumpled, there was a young woman wrapped in blankets lying on the bed snoring, she seemed dead-like. In addition to her hair being a mess, her feet were sticking out of the blanket.

Orphen quietly glanced towards Sarua. Sarua scratched his head, and said:

"Never mind. This is my room."

Orphen shut the door and pretended he saw nothing.

“Are you really from the Church?”

“Uhm, well, I had to deceive the others about somethings I like to do.”

“.....”

“For example, I like to pretend to get drunk every night, or tell children ghost stories if I’m in the mood. My favourite story to tell is the one about the rubber faced man, anyway I’ve taken great strides to hide my more noble activities.”

“...Whatever floats your boat.”

Orphen proceeded down the hall.

“Hmm.....which one is his bedroom?”

Sarua pointed to the door.

Orphen motioned to open the door.

He entered Makudogaru’s bedroom, it was surprisingly clean—or rather it should be said that there wasn’t much to misplace, the look of the room was very consistent of someone belonging to the Church—he tried to not think about the real face of the man who owned this room.

“It’s a lovely morning.”

Orphen forced himself to say. Makudogaru glanced towards him, he rubbed his chin as if he was listening to a bad joke.

“Of course it is, it’s morning in the forest.”

“Doesn’t it rain here?”

“Even if it rains, it’s still quiet in the morning. Quiet.....and sacred. The beginning of the end will come soon.”

“Is that so? With that kind of talk it’s easy to tell you are a member of the Church.”

At that moment, Makudogaru appeared to be shaken. His face tensed up, he said:

“What do you want, sorcerer?”

“What do I want?”

Sarua repeated the question after Orphen didn’t reply, he ignored him.

“Behind me stands an assassin from Kimurakku, he better stop bothering me.”

Sarua mumbled something. Orphen went on to say:

“Listen, I don’t give a damn about the heart of the forest, but you choose to indiscriminately shoot me. You shouldn’t have done that!”

“Hey, hey, it’s a bit too late for that.”

Sarua was about to grab him, Orphen looked back—seeing an opportunity, he dodged, he stretched his hand out and said:

“Guide me, O Starling of Death!”

After he said the incantation, he touched Sarua’s body, a destructive shockwave came down upon him—the assassin tumbled to the ground. He rolled on the floor a couple of times, desperately crying while doing so:

“You——traitor——”

“I don’t intend to join forces with an assassin.”

“Do you think you’ve bought yourself a favour?”

Makudogaru said. He fell to the ground without looking at Sarua.

“It doesn’t matter, he would have only complicated the transaction.”

“Transaction.....?”

Makudogaru frowned. Sarua couldn’t talk, he could only ferociously moan——

Orphen continued:

“Feina.”

“What.....!?”

Makudogaru’s eyes widened. Orphen stared at him, and repeated:

“Nothing more, nothing less. I’ve come to directly request——Feina. This way we can avoid further death. The same goes for the villagers.”

Makudogaru quickly regained his composure.

“What nonsense.....”

Orphen silently approached him. With Sarua lying on the floor, he went to Makudogaru’s bedside.

He went on to say:

“You don’t understand.....I’m aware of the dangers of this project. Even so I continue.....”

“What?”

“I’ve seen things that you haven’t, no matter what you think——this continent is doomed.....a powerful race is needed, we must go beyond the Dragon race.....”

Upon hearing those words, a memory flashed in Orphen’s mind. A few weeks ago, he met an abnormal spirit who said something similar.

“I met a guy who said something similar——except he didn’t seem afraid, are you?”

“Naturally.”

Orphen took a step closer, he was within arm’s length of Makudogaru.

“All of our reasons, are in the past.”

Whoosh——Orphen’s vision went black for a moment, all he could see was white sparkles. It was apparent he had been hit by a hard object, his body slumped onto the floor. He then heard a flurry of footsteps, Makudogaru had left the room.

(Damn it.....)

Orphen's forehead was stained with blood, he looked around and only saw Makudogaru's shadow, a broken vase, and Sarua on the floor.

Orphen chased Makudogaru into the hallway, he saw him enter a room two doors away, it snapped shut.

"Wait a minute, Makudogaru!"

Orphen said weakly. At the same time he opened the door.

The room appeared to be a storage room, Makudogaru was holding a pistol, he pointed it straight at him.

"Don't be so arrogant, you are a mere sorcerer!"

"And you are a stubborn old man."

"Sorcerers cannot be allowed to exist. Two hundred years ago was the Great War, do you know what happened?"

"The sorcerers survived and created nothing but a generation of envy....."

Orphen was a little groggy, the loss of blood was getting to him. The distance between him and Makudogaru was about five meters, even if he jumped he wouldn't be able to make it in time.

Makudogaru laughed, and said:

"Haha! Did you really think the Heavenly Beings could be defeated!?"

Makudogaru cried as he was about to pull the trigger. Orphen began an incantation:

"Sword of light, whom——"

Click! ——and then, a dull pain——

Orphen stumbled backwards, as he fell——he saw Sarua holding a smashed vase.

"You traitor——"

A voice said, in the process of falling back, he lost sight of everyone else. Makudogaru intended to pull the trigger again, but he stopped. He heard something——

Ker-chak——

On the right hand side of the corridor, a door opened. It appeared a bullet had struck the door.

A familiar stocky figure appeared at the door.

".....Huh?"

A bewildered Vulcan appeared wearing baggy pyjamas. He came out of the servant's room, Dortin followed after him.

There was no time to explain——Orphen's nerves were aching, he sweep kicked Sarua to the ground. It would be very easy to escape, he had been hit once, but he had enough strength to get him out of here.

He slammed the door behind him. Orphen intended to flee towards Makudogaru bedroom. Once again, the door was opened, Orphen jumped towards the bedroom door, Makudogaru raised his pistol and pulled the trigger——

Another door was opened in front of him, it blocked the bullet.

“Huh, what the hell?”

It was the room Sarua’s woman was sleeping in. She wore a towel from her chest downwards, she had a groggy look about her. Orphen impatiently kicked the woman back into the room.

“Get down!”

He used the door as a shield.

“Sword of light, whom I do release!”

Crackle!

A wave of light and heat punched through the door, scattering debris everywhere, the corridor began to burn——the whole building began to shake. After the burst of light had disappeared, the corridor bore multiple scorch marks. At the other end of the corridor was Makudogaru, him and the others were lying on the floor, only Sarua couldn’t be seen.

Vulcan and Dortin were shivering on the floor, Orphen walked around them towards Makudogaru. Although he was still alive, he was subject to the debris from the door, he sustained multiple wounds and was bleeding. He couldn’t see the pistol, it must be somewhere else. Orphen patted Makudogaru on the face.

“Hey, get up!”

He groaned——slowly blinked his eyes, he regained consciousness.

Orphen slowly said to him:

“Listen——those are mortal wounds. Left unattended, you will die. Though I could use my magic to heal you.”

“Ah.....!”

Makudogaru groaned due to the pain, or maybe he was just revolted at the thought of using magic to heal himself, Orphen couldn’t tell.

“If you want to live, speak up——or would you rather die without seeing Kimurakku again?”

Makudogaru said nothing.

“You bastard! You must really want to die! If that’s true, then it’s no big deal!”

“Ah...ah...”

“Damn it...you are such an idiot!”

Orphen closed his eyes, he quickly pulled Makudogaru’s body out from under the debris. He stretched forth his hand, and said:

“I heal thee, scar of the setting sun!”



Using magic, Makudogaru's injuries were quickly cured—even the scratches were gone, with the disappearance of the wounds, Makudogaru's strength began to recover.

“Ah.....ah.....hmm...”

Orphen heard an eerie sound, he looked around for the source. He was surprised that he couldn't find it, he then looked back towards——suddenly, Makudogaru had raised his hand. He was holding a pistol directly at himself——the muzzle was pressed against his forehead——

Bang!

“.....”

The bullet penetrated Makudogaru's skull. As if he was a puppet whose strings had been cut, his head fell backwards. Makudogaru was taking his secrets to the grave.

“I.....”

Orphen stood up, he was shocked by what happened.

“Weird, it shouldn't have went off. You see, it was damaged from you magic attack.”

It was Sarua. He fled into a nearby room. With his sword in hand, he hid behind the woman wrapped in a towel.

Small bits of flame were still present in the hallway, Sarua shrugged.

“I guess my time here is at an end——people have been trying to kill him for a while, but now this, retribution will follow. I will not become a prisoner, nor besieged by the villagers.”

The woman began to panic.

“W-Why did he have to die?”

“Because it's a good day today, isn't that right, Krylancelo?”

Sarua winked at him. Orphen was indifferent.

“Well, there's no more need for killing, right? I'll be leaving, take Feina with you.”

“.....”

“How can you be so calm after this?”

“That goes without saying, I'm used to this sort of thing.”

He then walked towards the entrance. Sarua looked back and said:

“Although I can't say that I'm happy. It's been nice knowing you, traitor, later.”

A moment later, Sarua was gone——Orphen watched him leave, thinking all the while.

(Makudogaru shot himself in the head.)

He remembered that moment.

(Why.....did he despise magic so much that he would refuse treatment?)

“Anyway, you're dead now. Nobody weeps for an idiot, Makudogaru.”

After Orphen was done, he wiped the blood off his forehead.

(What an idiot, I bet he was real happy pulling the trigger.....)

“Who cares? It’s no big deal anyway. Though, I better save that stupid racoon dog before he causes trouble.”

He thought about that moment again, he wondered if Makudogaru was unconsciously smiling. After a while, he felt sorry for him.

Just then, he heard a familiar voice outside.

“Come on, hurry!”

There was a lot of movement outside the house, he could easily tell that a crowd was gathering—he could hear them through the walls. Orphen looked around the corridors, he didn’t know where to run——

He recalled what Sarua had said to him, “I will not become a prisoner, nor besieged by the villagers.”

(Prisoner, whose prisoner?)

He then heard someone shouting outside——it was Vulcan.

“Gather round! The evil sorcerer has stuck, he’s killed our beloved leader!”

“Of course it would be him, the fool.....”

Orphen said to himself, then he heard the crowd cursing his name outside.

“Oh, this is so boring.”

Cleo said as she hid in the bushes. Beside her, a few men turned around in anger.

“Obviously.”

“Ah.”

“Ugh.”

“.....”

Cleo was holding her sheath, she looked at the three men——they were around thirty years old, they wore military jackets, all of them began to mumble.

They were in the outskirts of the village, in front of a row of houses, the villagers couldn’t see them from here. All houses in the village had a smaller warehouse type building, it also acted as a side entrance. Cleo hid in one of these the night before yesterday. In accordance with Orphen’s plan, she was to wait with the soldiers outside the village.

“I can’t stand much more of this.”

A soldier complained, then he sighed. Although he didn’t like the idea of Cleo being armed, it was necessary to keep her safe. He and his companions carried iron bars, they were half a meter long, these weapons could be easily used to deflect attacks and carry out a follow up attack, this was one of the standard pieces of equipment that soldiers carried.

“Why didn’t we rescue them yesterday?”

“Because...we can’t. Orphen said not to move until morning. I’ve got no idea why I agreed to wait.....”

“The hostage should never command the rescue team.....”

When she heard the soldier’s words, she wanted to beat him over the head, but she ignored him, looking back towards the village.

“Come on, let’s draw up a plan, where are the weak points?”

She said passionately, but the guards weren’t listening to her.

“Is there something wrong?”

One of the guards began to cry.

“You know, I was just thinking about my mother’s last words.....don’t trust blondes, they only cause suffering——”

“Ah, I’m getting sick of you. Enough.”

Cleo angrily whispered, her angry face full of colour.

At that time——

“Huh?”

Cleo noticed something. It was at her feet——something black and furry was touching her shoes. The hairball was as bigger than her hands, for a moment Cleo thought it was a black fox, but she soon realize that it was no black fox. The hairball——its black tail dangled in the grass, it was about the same size as a dogs tail.

“Hey, what is that?”

Cleo poked one of the soldier’s shoulders.

“Who knows.....maybe it’s a dogs tail.”

The soldiers mused about this for a moment. Cleo began to feel the tail, and said:

“A dog’s tail wouldn’t be so wet, would it?”

“Wet.....?”

The solders became somewhat shocked.

“Yeah.”

Cleo confirmed for a second time, she was about to grab the tail. At that moment, the grass began to shake——

Suddenly she grabbed the tail, what seemed like a black puppy came out from the bushes. The pup rolled around, trying to regain control of its own tail again. Cleo thought that this puppy seemed to be more intellectual than most——Cleo couldn’t help but stare as it opened its face, the puppies eyes were bright emerald green.

“A Deep——Dragon——”

The three soldiers screamed all at once.

“.....A deep dragon?”

Cleo stared at it, and pondered. It was indeed a child of a Dragon.

The small Deep Dragon pressed the tip of its nose against Cleo's hands. It was nothing like a baby pup, it was trying to push her hands. Upon seeing this, Cleo couldn't help but laughed——she remembered what Orphen said about this, that they were meant to be very dangerous.

Cleo turned to the soldiers, she was surprised to find that they had raised their weapons——they were bearing them down upon the pup.

“What are you doing!?”

Cleo cried out, she tried to cover the Deep Dragon from their attacks——her face took the blunt of the attack, she was knocked to the ground.

“It hurts.....!”

Cleo groaned, the Deep Dragon struggled to move in her arms. The soldiers were very surprised.

“Hey, hey——are you okay?”

“How——”

She suddenly became furious.

“How dare you! It could have been crushed from the fall!”

“It doesn't seem to be hurt.....”

One of the soldiers said. Cleo turned to him and shouted:

“It's a child!”

She motioned her chin towards the Deep Dragon, it seemed very comfortable in her arms.

“Hey, hey, wait a second——”

She got up from the ground and rubbed her chin. One of the soldiers said:

“It's a Deep Dragon, if you found it in this forest then it spells doom for all of us.”

“Keep quiet, we don't want the villagers finding out.”

Upon hearing this, Cleo instantly shut up. Even though they were in the outskirts of the village, someone could be lurking nearby.

“Don't you find it strange that a Deep Dragon is near a human settlement?”

“Maybe it's lost.”

Cleo felt an ominous presence sweep over them——she didn't know if the others felt it, but she looked behind herself anyway.

She looked in fear——a huge black beast was nearby.

“Ahh——”

It silently stood among the trees, hidden from sight.

“Why didn’t the others notice it?”

Cleo asked herself. One of the soldiers answered in a trembling voice:

“It’s said that a Deep Dragon can hide in its own shadow.”

“We’re done for.....”

“My mother was right——blondes are nothing but trouble.....”

Cleo quietly observed the Deep Dragon.

The Dragon stood about four meters tall. It had a thick black coat, its elongated nose pointed towards her, and its eyes were green just like the pups.

(It’s such a beautiful animal.)

Cleo said to herself. Now she knew why people worshipped such creatures.

The eyes of the Deep Dragon suddenly narrowed. Its mouth moved towards Cleo, its jaws gently opened and lifted the small Dragon from her arms.

(It seems this little pup is its child, but why is it near the village?)

“Why have you come here?”

The Dragon didn’t answer.

“I said.....”

Cleo suddenly stopped speaking. For something else had appeared——it was another Dragon. She hurriedly looked around.

“Uh.....”

Cleo stood in dismay. Around her——countless Dragons had appeared around the village, all of them quietly standing still.

She glanced towards the three soldiers, all of them were trembling——they looked at its fine sharp nose——and then to the village, they shook their heads. None of them could believe this was happening, it was like a dream. The total number of Deep Dragons surrounding the village were a few dozen. Even an army of sorcerers couldn’t take them out, and yet they seemed to stand in Orphen and Majic’s way. Caught in between these Dragons and the village, Cleo couldn’t be in a worse situation.

She then felt something poking her shoes. She looked down, it was the small Dragon rolling around on the ground.

Cleo picked it up, and sighed. Whatever was going to happen, they would face it together.

Chapter 6 – The killing winds

Right away, a man armed with an axe busted down the front door, he shouted:

“You stupid sorcerer!”

Another man rushed in behind him. They were heading down the straight hallway——Orphen stretched his hand towards the leading man.

He took a deep breath, and shouted:

“I let thou flow, angel's breath!”

A magical blast of wind quickly pushed the man backwards, he covered his mouth and cursed. Orphen squinted as the man struck the other, both of them were blown to a dead end, he didn't pay them any attention, as he cried:

“Sword of light, whom I do release!”

A wave of light and heat flew from his fingertips, searing the walls and exploding like a firecracker. Orphen rushed down the corridor, the billowing smoke proved to be enough for his escape from the house.

“He's running away!”

A townspeople cried. After Orphen heard this, he looked back towards the house.

“Makudogaru...”

He recalled the moment when Makudogaru shot himself in the head, Orphen said:

“It would have costed extra to bury the body.”

He raised his hand, he didn't hesitate to use the maximum amount of power.

“I crush thee, origin of silence!”

At that moment——the centre of the house began to crumble, it was followed by a loud noise, a huge explosion. Orphen dodged the flying pieces of debris from the house, as he ran quickly. The explosion of the house hindered those who wanted to follow after him, though——when they saw how much power he wielded, they gave chase. Although he was sorry for those who were in and near the house, he knew they were unlikely to die.

The noise emitted from the crumbling house was deafening, it mixed in with the villagers screams around the village.

He wanted to make the most out of this opportunity, he thought of a few——one of them was to cause confusion, but keep himself calm.

Orphen ran and casually stretched forth his hand, without looking he casted magic.

“Sword of Light, whom I do release!”

A torrent of light and heat flew through the air. The resulting explosion engulfed several buildings, setting them aflame.

(This should sow some confusion.....)

Orphen thought, as he ran in the opposite direction of the inferno.

After a few meters—someone spotted him.

“There he is!”

“Over there!”

Orphen immediately shouted:

“I call thee, sisters of rupture!”

The air vibrated, multiple shockwaves sent all but one of the villagers to the ground.

“.....Uh?”

The young man couldn't help but stare in amazement, he looked back and forth to his fallen comrades.

“You—you—you are our enemy.”

The man picked up a brick, he aimed at Orphen's stomach. Orphen mercilessly kicked him to the ground. The young man moaned as he fell, Orphen continued to hit him in the head until he couldn't take it anymore.

“Man.....you sure are a troublesome lot.”

Orphen said as he ran. Even if he was able to trick half of the villagers, the other half would soon become aware of what was really happening.

“Master!”

He ran in the direction of the shouting, he was Majic, he was standing in the street, waving at him.

Orphen then got angry.

“What are you doing in a place like this?”

“Because——”

Majic slowly began to explain:

“I went to get Feina out of the village, but she wasn't in the Tower! I looked all around the village.....”

“I am a man of my word! Can't you do anything right!?”

“But Master, if we don't get her out of the village.....Makudogaru will kill her!”

Orphen angrily grabbed Majic by the collar.

“Just meet up with Cleo and the others, get out of here now, I'll deal with the rest.”

“Fine, I'll do what Master wants.”

“I won't stand for this——every time I tell you to do something you just ignore what I say.”

Orphen was done reprimanding him, he wiped his brow. Although it was morning, the temperature had begun to rise. Suddenly——

“Wuhahaha!”

Laughter echoed throughout the village. The atmosphere of the village became unpleasant.

Orphen half opened his eyes, and said:

“Majic, listen to me. I’ll deal with this.”

“I know. That needn’t be said.”

The laughter continued.

“Villagers! It’s time for purge this place of the evil sorcerer! Not because of personal reasons, but for righteousness!”

Needless to say, it was Vulcan’s voice. He had unwittingly begun to incite the villagers.

Orphen couldn’t tell where the voice was coming from, so he climbed on top of a nearby house to get a better look.

Not too far away he saw them——Vulcan and Dortin were leading a bunch of villagers (mostly children) down the street.

Orphen then shouted:

“I construct thee, spire of the sun!”

Suddenly, without any warning, Vulcan was surrounded by a pillar of fire.

“Ahhhhh!”

The children beside Vulcan all screamed and scattered. Dortin ran away too, taking cover nearby. Vulcan jumped, and seemed to dance, a moment later, the fire was gone. Vulcan knew who was responsible for this.

“You bastard!”

Noticing Orphen, he pointed a finger at him, and shouted:

“You wouldn’t even care if all those people got burned! When the sun rises to its highest point in the sky, I will launch my surprise attack and kill you once and for all!”

“I don’t know what he’s talking about…….”

Dortin said. Orphen wasn’t putting up for any of his nonsense.

“I’m sick of you! You’re the one who keeps putting people’s lives in danger, and betraying them every chance you get.”

“Oh, you are a despicable murderer, the villagers will hand you for what you did!”

“Me? They’ll hang you for being a stupid racoon dog!”

“All of these stupid villagers are under my spell, my voice is like poetry to their ears, they seem you as the murderer you truly are.”

“We’ll see about that!”

Orphen shouted loudly, as he prepared an incantation:

“Sword of light, whom I do release!”



A barrage of light and heat swallowed Vulcan whole, the resulting explosion knocked him out.

“That’ll shut you up.”

Someone then screamed behind him.

“Wahhhhhh!”

It was Majic, he was shouting as he climbed onto the roof. Actually, he was being forced up onto the roof by the villagers who were chasing him.

Orphen immediately looked around him. All the villagers were around them, they had the small house surrounded.

“This is just great.”

Orphen said to himself. Majic carefully ran over to him, and said:

“Master, what are we going to do?”

He listened to his student, and sighed.

“You never do listen.”

Orphen grabbed Majic by shoulders.

Majic cried:

“Uh——your hurting me, Master.”

“If I let you go, you will die!”

“...Huh?”

“I’ll use magic to get us out of the village.”

“I didn’t know you could do such a thing.”

“It might be possible——it will be a little rough but I’m sure we’ll live.”

“Don’t make a sound, I’m trying to transfer your magic to me. That way we’ll get further away.”

“O-okay!”

There was no time to think, the numerous villagers had already drawn their murderous weapons. Some of them were attempting to climb onto the roof.

“If I fail, our bodies will boil and disappear. If there is an obstacle in our way, the possibility that we will die is high. If we fidget too much, it will cause the air to heat up, we can’t let this happen, it needs to be perfect.”

He turned his gaze towards the villagers, and went on to say:

“These people will most likely fight until the last man. Would you do the same?”

“You mean do I want to die?”

Majic hastily said, Orphen shook his head and said:

“No, you’re wrong.”

“Huh?”

“These people will do anything to survive, regardless of the outcome. For example, they may use Feina as a hostage.”

“I won’t let that happen.”

Majic retorted. Orphen didn’t really care. This bickering wasn’t helping. One of the men had already climbed onto the roof, he was armed with a shovel.

“Damn it...this situation just got worse.”

Orphen clenched his fist. He couldn’t risk losing some of the energy he was taking from Majic, but he had to do something about the villager.

“Eat shit!”

Orphen screamed, as he knocked the man off the roof.

“Hey. It seems they are waiting.”

Sarua heard a voice, he looked up and saw Feina wearing a brown cloak.

There was a lot of hustle and bustle in the village. They could hear an explosion in the distance. However, they were not concerned about this.....

She saw him first, and lowered his eyelids.

“Are we going without that person?”

“Who?”

Sarua asked, puzzled. The girl hesitated, she spoke.

“One of Makudogaru’s servants. I know about you and her, you are lovers.”

“You mean me and that woman?”

It wasn’t that kind of relationship. At least not since him and his brother had fallen, he was meant to bring her back home. —However, in the face of Feina, Sarua had to be very clear.

(Please don’t think of me as a man who holds a beauty in the palm of his hands, or a triumphant hero. I am just a humble and poor assassin.)

Sarua then said:

“Everyone in the village is confused.....and besides, I didn’t know where else to go. She’s probably still here somewhere, for her, it’s better I stay here.”

Feina stayed silent.

“Come on. Let’s take advantage of the confusion.”

Sarua waved his hand.

"If you are still worried about Majic, don't worry, he won't die...he can't die."

Her eyes flashed, she happily said:

"It'll be impossible for him to die here."

However, Feina had a weird feeling—she uneasily looked at the centre of the village, and said:

"Okay.....I'm ready, are you?"

Sarua looked her up and down, then he said:

"Now that Makudogaru is dead, if the villagers catch you they'll imprison you. The most important thing is that you survive all of this."

"Okay...where are we going?"

"Jimulake. You'll be my daughter while we're travelling, we're heading to meet my brother."

"I'd like to meet your brother."

"You'll regret those words someday."

Sarua sighed, and gently patted her on the head.

He looked behind himself, he could hear Orphen yelling some magical incantation.

"That guy.....he won't die in a place like this."

He softly said to himself. Feina looked at him with a look of surprise on her face.

Then, he brought Feina into the forest.

Majic and Orphen were still on the roof, both of them were nearly out of breath. They had just defended themselves against a couple of villagers. Orphen looked at Majic, he took a deep breath, and said:

".....Can you hold it much longer?"

Majic didn't answer, he just shook his head.

(He's doing well, for a kid.)

Even though he didn't have much combat skills, he had repulsed the enemy with magical attacks. But——

"Stop right there."

Five more men had climbed up onto the roof—they were very young, around twenty years old. They were armed with pistols.

"Looks like its Makudogaru's private guard!"

Orphen sarcastically said.

“You evil sorcerer—you killed our great leader, we will have our revenge!”

Orphen casually responded:

“Whatever you say, buddy! I’m tired.”

“M-Master!?”

Orphen ignored Majic.

“Aim a little higher. One can’t solve problems by taking people’s lives away.”

“.....Away?”

The man didn’t understand, Orphen continued to smile.

“In a village like this, don’t you have anyone to teach you how to make another leader?”

The men all looked at each other in confusion.

Orphen went on to say:

“You guys should have paid more attention—because I’m seizing this opportunity!”

“What!?”

(It’s time!)

Orphen said to himself. He grabbed Majic with all of his might.

“I dance in thee——”

The men immediately raised their guns.

“——Mansion of Heaven!”

“Wahhhhhh!”

Majic couldn’t help but cry out. Orphen propelled them with his magic to a nearby house instead of clearing the village.

With his feet steady on the roof, Orphen cried out:

“Sword of light, whom I do release!”

A barrage of light and heat struck the house they once stood on. The men fell off the burning house one by one.

“You did it!”

Majic cheered, but the villagers simply surrounded the house they stood on.

“In this case...”

Orphen wiped the sweat from his head.

“I think I’ll play with them!”

Orphen struck an offensive posture. He began to channel his magical energy. He could feel his whole body infused with power——

——He felt like his body was floating——

His body was wrapped in it, it was a very quiet feeling.....gentle.

Whoosh!

What sounded like gushing water filled everyone's ears. Meanwhile, their vision was blinded, Orphen screamed. When it was all over——

Orphen opened his eyes. Nothing changed around him. Nothing...

Majic fell to the ground in front of him. He looked towards the centre of the village——there was a huge crater. The tower...the factories...all of it vanished in a flash.

"What just..."

Orphen was astonished. In the empty crater.....there was a hissing sound, giant objects appeared all around them. The Deep Dragon-Fenrir!

The villagers stared in amazement.

Orphen looked around, he didn't know when the Deep Dragon's surrounded them.

"Orphen!"

Suddenly, a clear voice broke the silence. Upon closer inspection, in the centre of the village was a Deep Dragon, on its back stood Cleo. Somehow she was still holding the little Dragon in her arms, behind her, three soldiers trembled with fear.

Orphen and the villagers were all confused.

"This Dragon——how should I say this——is very, very angry!"

".....Huh?"

"It says all these people in the village should die!"

After she said those words, the eyes of the Deep Dragon widened.

At that moment, white hot flame seemly spread over everything——the light and the heat was too great for them to stand. The sound of buildings evaporating filled their ears, and presumably, boiling metal. In the glaring light——Orphen covered his face with his arms. Sweeping hot air touched his skin, bringing severe pain.

After the light disappeared, half the village was gone.

Silence——then——

"Ahhhh!"

(All that with just a glance!?)

Orphen desperately watched the Deep Dragon. Around him, the villagers were panicking. A considerable number of villagers caught up in the attack.

"Black magic?"

Orphen said to himself. Majic was now on his knees, crying.

"W-W-Wha..."

Orphen grabbed Majic by the shoulders and pulled him up. He then shouted:

“Cleo, what the hell are you doing on the back of that dragon?”

“Because——”

The girl shouted, but the little dragon was fidgeting in her arms.

“This child’s family, their plan is to destroy the village, they are willing to let us leave——I really wanted to stop them, so they brought us with them.”

“I can’t believe this——”

Orphen was willing to berate her, but he gave up. He felt something hard squeeze into his mind.

He instinctively diverted his attention——it was naturally the eyes of the Deep Dragon. Its deep green emerald eyes shining brightly.

“You, you have violated the sacred rules. This is taboo.”

This voice——is was just like that time he sneaked into the village at night, it was speaking to his mind.

“For this, you will be executed.”

Among the crowd of villagers, none of them could understand this silence. But——they knew it wasn’t good, it was a sign something was going to happen.

Soon, the killing will begin.

“.....Taboo?”

With great difficulty, Orphen jumped off the roof. The Dragon’s eyes flashed, intense heat flew out——looking around, it was clear that over a dozen people were incinerated. A white pillar of fire was in the sky, it disappeared shortly after.

“Woah.....”

Orphen dropped to the ground, and grabbed his dragon pendant. His heart beat rapidly——it was hopeless.

“Shit, shit, shit!”

Orphen ripped off his dragon pendant, he raised it high as if it was a weapon. The Deep Dragon ignored him, it was ready to continue the attack. Orphen shouted:

“I dance in thee, mansion of heaven!”

This was transfer magic——but he didn’t transfer himself, but the cold silver pendant in his hands. In an instant the Dragon Pendant disappeared, a sharp sound filled his ears——it went through the Dragon’s body, and appeared on the other side.

An explosion occurred in the Dragon’s throat. The resulting shockwave forced it to lean sideways——those riding on its back fell off. The black dragon slowly raised its head.

(Okay, it seemed that trick didn’t work...)

Orphen was desperate, he needed to do something quick.

The black beast looked Orphen firmly in the eye—he didn't know whether it was going to attack or not. Meanwhile, the villagers started to flee in every direction, they disappeared into the light of the fires.

(With a single glance, it will remove me from this world.)

Orphen was afraid to admit it, he couldn't win.

"Orphen!"

Someone suddenly shouted his name. It was Cleo, she still had the little dragon in her arms, she and Majic ran over beside him.

"I'll help you!"

She simply said.

".....And how are you going to do that?"

Cleo and Majic believed they could do something. Orphen looked at them, he felt like laughing, and then—he looked towards the Dragon's powerful eyes.

(If Krylancelo was here, things would be different.)

"We have no chance of winning, even if we came up with a plan, a bluff, they wouldn't be effective—it can read our minds!"

"...What are we going to do?"

Cleo asked. Orphen sighed. In an instant, Orphen pulled the little dragon from Cleo's arms and grabbed it by the neck.

"We have a hostage!"

"O-Orphen!"

Cleo screamed. Majic saw this, he was shocked. Although he didn't expect it to be used as a shield, there was nothing else he could do.

"I'm serious, you damn Deep Dragon....."

Orphen shouted, knowing it could already read his mind. He summarized that it was probably its mother, that way she would cooperate easily.

"I won't ask why you attacked this village—I just want you to leave this place!"

The small dragon didn't seem to understand what was going on, even so, it seemed pretty calm.

"If you leave this place, I will let this child go. Decide quickly.....I received training in the art of magical assassination, I'll act without mercy."

There was no answer, in front of him...the Dragon's eyes narrowed.

After a long silence, she said:

"Do as you like."

"What?"

Orphen didn't believe it. The Dragon then said flatly:

“Do not underestimate our magic.....we can give life, and take it. We are warriors. We can give pain, but also heal it.”

Its green eyes opened.

“Our race does not have a meaningless existence——yours on the other hand, your lives are worthless.”

“...Worthless?”

Orphen clenched his teeth.

Although he knew having purpose in life was one thing, casual disregard of life was another.

“Killing people, such a thing shouldn’t be allowed.”

Orphen said, as he thought about all those poor people who were incinerated. He put his hand on the small dragon’s neck, stretched it forwards, towards the Deep Dragon.

“I commend you, but you don’t understand.”

The Dragon quietly said.

“Farewell.”

The next moment, the Dragon closed its eyes. So did Orphen.

A moment passed, the Dragon didn’t launch an attack. Upon seeing this, Orphen immediately turned around and started running——

He bumped into a few of the villagers, and ran towards his chosen destination.

He ran down the street towards the house he had set on fire earlier, he looked around the place for a while. He was looking for something made from iron, a pistol.

Orphen picked it up without saying anything. He looked down the barrel, and confirmed that there were bullets inside, he counted a total of four shots. Holding the gun in his hand, he hoped that the raging fires wouldn’t cause the gun to explode.

Haa——Orphen exhaled.

“Magic won’t work, guns won’t work, but I can’t fight it unarmed.”

He held the gun firmly in his right hand.

“Are you ready?”

——A voice suddenly said in his head.

Orphen cried:

“I spin thee, armour of light!”

At the same time, he raised his right arm.

As he held his arm up, an array of light surrounded his body. Then, everything was covered with light——then, it was gone.

The array of light had disappeared.



Whoosh.....a gust of wind blew past him——Orphen and the Deep Dragon stared at one another. The house was gone, he looked around the village and saw only Deep Dragons——the escaping villagers were nowhere to be seen. Not far from the village, lay the stiff bodies of Cleo and Majic——Cleo still holding the little Dragon in her arms. He didn't know where the three soldiers went.

Orphen simply raised the pistol with both hands, and pressed the trigger. Bang——he aimed for its eyes, the bullet flew towards the Dragon, and then——it disappeared.

It seemed the Dragon deflected the bullet with magic.

Orphen didn't say a word.

"Do not hate us.....we are a race of warriors. We live to fight."

"You annihilated defenceless human beings, that isn't a fight! That's a massacre!"

"We had our orders, the village was no longer necessary."

".....No longer necessary?"

He thought of all those poor villagers who died.

"They worshiped you!"

"We know this. Our servitor was here."

A face appeared in Orphen's mind, it was Fiena's.

"I see. The priestess."

"Our master needed information on Makudogaru——we allowed him to give her shelter, put her in the village."

".....Information....."

He squeezed the gun so hard it hurt.

(The Dragon, no, their master.)

"Although Fiena spent a lot of time in the village, he may have either lost or forgotten the information we seek."

Orphen thought their judgement was wrong, but he didn't dare refute them. Makudogaru was dead, this was unjustified.

He asked about something else.

"Why are you telling me these things?"

"Isn't it obvious?"

Orphen felt the Dragon's eyes piercing his body.

"We want you to be our new servitor."

"....."

Orphen immediately jumped backwards——he was ready to cast defensive magic, but he knew it was impossible for a human to successfully defend themselves against a Deep Dragon.

No matter how far he could jump, he could never get away from the spiritual domination of the Deep Dragon.

He shouted:

"I spin thee, armour of light!"

Such things cannot resist the power of a Deep Dragon. As soon as the light started to surround him, it disappeared.

(.....?!)

Orphen couldn't believe it, he continued to cast magic.

"Sword of light, whom I do release!"

The wave of light and heat dissipated a few seconds after it left the palm of his hand.

Suddenly, an idea flashed in Orphen's head.

(I see...you guys...)

"You finally noticed."

The Dragon's voice was very calm. Faced with this unusually quiet tone, Orphen was no longer scared.

He shouted in his head.

(You aren't gods! You are sorcerers!)

Magic is not a power that can fix everything, only God-like "magic" can do that.

Even so, that doesn't mean the gap of power between Orphen and the Deep Dragon got any smaller.

Like voice magic, it can only go as far as your voice can be heard——

(The same goes for dark magic, it cannot work outside their line of sight.)

With the overwhelming heat that destroyed the village, they were unable to deal with it, just like their use of mental domination in this area, but as long as they can block their line of sight, they can defend themselves.

"Majic!"

Orphen cried, as he fired two pistol rounds. The Dragon easily destroyed it.

"Use that!"

"Hmm...use what?"

Majic shouted.

(Does he mean that spell?)

At that time, Majic shouted in a high pitched voice:

"I disrupt thee, column of light!"

He said the incantation with excellent proficiency. In the area around him, light began to reflect from numerous metal objects, blinding the Deep Dragon.

“You plan to block my line of sight.”

The Dragon said in a calm tone. However, due to its line of sight being blocked, its voice was distorted.

“Exactly.”

Orphen said.

“We’ll reflect the light and hit you in your blind spots.”

“Ahhh!”

Majic shouted in a panicked voice.

At this time, Orphen also began to cast magic. With his right hand extended, he shouted:

“I construct thee, spire of the sun!”

Compressed objects began to expand, they could hear things rubbing together. These objects exploded, causing a great crimson fire to surround the Deep Dragon.

“You can’t prevail with just this.”

“I know!”

Orphen had little room for error.

He was ready to unleash his next attack, at that time——

Boom! It was followed by a crackling sound, and a moan from the Dragon.

Wrapped around the inferno, the Deep Dragon fell to the ground. The remaining villagers and Deep Dragon were shocked.

“The pistol exploded.”

Orphen said, as he stared at the Deep Dragon.

“Blocking its line of sight allowed me to play a little trick——I threw the pistol towards its head, the heat forced the barrel to overheat and explode the remaining bullets. Hitting the target with maximum efficiency.”

“By blocking my mental domination, I couldn’t read your thoughts.....”

At such a close range, the Dragon should have only received minor injuries, even so, its voice was a bit chaotic.

“However, you can’t kill me.....”

“.....”

This was a fact. The Dragon was still alive, and even if he did manage to kill it, there was still more surrounding the village.

Orphen remained silent. The Deep Dragon continued:

“Even so, we can still eliminate you.”

“.....”

Orphen tightly clenched his fist.

Hearing this words, it was contrary to Orphen's expectations.

"I know your true name——Krylancelo."

".....What.....?"

Orphen felt like he had been punched in the gut. It was impossible for the Dragon to know his true name, there was no way it could have hear it.

"I know your partner——because of our agreement, I won't kill you. If you want to protect the lives of those around you, kneel before us, and we will leave."

"....."

Orphen watched the Deep Dragons, his mind was to breaking point. His partner——a human and a dragon——made an agreement?

A godlike race made a pact.

To be able to do such a thing——

Orphen could only think of one person.

(The strongest sorcerer on the continent——my teacher, Childman, was it him?)

He shouted in his mind, but the Dragon didn't answer. It slowly got up, even though it was injured, it didn't make a sound.

"However, this village must be destroyed. Those who attempt to enter the sacred forest must be eliminated."

All the Dragon's rose around them, their eyes focused on the village. Knowing what would happen, Orphen closed his eyes.

(When I open them——no one will exist——we will all be dead.)

He could feel the searing heat all around him, it was almost unbearable.

Then, it was gone. He opened his eyes.

The whole village was gone. It was completely removed from the earth, the entire area where the village once stood was scorched beyond belief.

Though oddly, it seemed Cleo, Majic, and none of the villagers died. Including Orphen.

They found themselves lying on the ground, staring upwards at the Deep Dragons who stood over them. A smaller figure stood over Orphen.

(Cleo.....?)

No, the body was too small, it was Fiena——the priestess.

"Why did you come back? Fiena....."

The Dragon's voice echoed across the scorched earth. Orphen could feel the girls voice answer, it was tense and stiff——but surprisingly clear.

"I know I was meant to escape. These villagers have infringed upon the sanctity of the forest, they cannot be let go, this I know."

"Yes.....I told you as much. Though, what about the assassin? He has fled, hasn't he?"



“Yes, I showed Sarua the way out of the forest, he has some information you might want. But he is my friend, I won’t hand him over to you, and the same goes for these people.”

She looked at Majic, then looked back at the Dragon. With open arms, she said:

“I share all your five senses, I can use your magic—you are the Deep Dragon tribe, you are small in number yet very powerful, but you can’t leave this place, can you? If you did, your magic would stop working.”

“It appears you have chosen poorly.....”

As the Dragon spoke, an electric shock went through Fiena’s body, it appeared she was released from her bonds. Due to the impact, the girl was sent flying backwards, Orphen quickly stepped forward grabbed her. Trembling, she went on to say:

“This was a mistake from the beginning. You should have sought a stronger person, maybe then.....Makudogaru could have been persuaded. Then this foolish plan could have been avoided all together.”

Afterwards, she began to cry—Orphen felt she was in a state of confusion, he was in no position to comfort her. He looked over at Majic, winking at him.

Majic ran over, and took Fiena in his arms. Orphen then said:

“Makudogaru is dead. No one will infringe upon the forest anymore. You should not have appeared in force.....”

“You are missing the point, crime deserves punishment.”

“Haven’t you killed enough people?”

“The forest was violated because they don’t understand the meaning of sacred land.”

“How does that require the slaughter of an entire village?”

“Crime deserves punishment.”

The Dragon said flatly, Orphen was speechless, then, a voice came from behind them.

“It’s time!”

It was Cleo. It seemed she was launching some kind of surprise attack. Holding the little Dragon in her arms, she said:

“Go for it!”

Suddenly, an enormous light shined from the little Dragon’s eyes. It hit the Deep Dragon’s feet, expanding and consuming everything in its sight.

Numerous loud sounds filled everyone’s ears—then it stopped, all the Deep Dragon’s had seemingly disappeared. It was obvious that blow hadn’t killed them, they must have retreated. Whoosh—a gust of wind was left in their wake, only silence remained.

“Human sorcerer.....we are at that girl’s mercy.....we must obey.....”

“.....!?”

Orphen looked towards Cleo and the small Dragon. It seemed she was its new mother, like a baby, it buried its head and began rubbing itself against Cleo.

“My kind are warriors, we have paid our price. Even Kings and Queens cannot handle our power, yet you have been given it for free.”

“.....”

No one spoke after that.

“If you were to retain your own freedom that would be dangerous. You will be under our control from now on, you must obey our orders.”

“Like hell I will!”

Stretching his hand forward, he exclaimed:

“Sword of light, whom I do release!”

A wave of light and heat disappeared into the forest. There was no response from the Dragon, even if there was, Orphen didn’t want to hear it.

A moment later, the only thing they could hear was the rustling of the forest.

No one really understood the real meaning behind their words. Fiena was still crying——except now, these were tears of joy. Majic patted her back, comforting her. So too were the villagers happy, their time in the forest was truly over, they would mourn their dead and move on towards a brighter horizon. Finally, Orphen looked at Cleo, her blue eyes shining in the darkness. With the little dragon at her chest, he wondered what the future held for them all.

Orphen shifted his attention upwards. Looking up at the morning sky, he watched it change colour.

Chapter 7 – Epilogue

“.....Long ago, in order to eliminate the sorcerers, magical weapons called Killing Dolls were created.....gathered in this village was the people who created built them, it was a sort of breeding ground. The villagers today are the descendants of those people.....though not many of them are die hard Dragon Faith believers.”

They listened to Fiena’s explanation, even though they didn’t really care, it made them think.

Even though there were preparing to leave for a while, they still weren’t ready.

The entire village was scorched earth, there was nothing left for the villagers to take with them—it will take some time for the villagers, time to forget their home and what had transpired.

No one wanted to stay and rebuild their homes. Not only did they lose their homes, they had lost their faith. Fiena had told them about the outside world, about nearby villages and towns. Hoping they would head there and find peace once again.

Looking at the charred land, a million thoughts went into the villagers head’s as they set off in numerous directions. Orphen was watching them, he asked Fiena:

“However, with so many people, where are you going?”

“I’m going back to my village, to Sorichian. If nobody wants me, I’ll head to a nearby village. Most villagers are short on man-power, living in one of them should be no problem.”

“Is this what you want?”

Orphen asked with a smile. She put a hand to her mouth and giggled.

“Majic, he asked the same thing. You shouldn’t worry about me.”

“.....Do you still suffer, under the Dragon’s domination?”

Her face became very peaceful.

“Despite the loss of my magical powers.....no, how should I say this? I don’t need them anymore. Even in the face of the Deep Dragon, you fought bravely.”

“Not just me, we all did.”

Orphen shrugged his shoulders. He asked:

“Actually, not that I care anymore. But.....do you know where the Dragon Race’s sacred land is?”

Fiena listened, and shook her head.

“I don’t know any of that—maybe that child will know.”

He followed her finger, she pointed towards Majic, Cleo, and the little Deep Dragon. It was jumping around the place, and doing summersaults. It moved very fast, Cleo was matching its speed.

“That one.....”

Even though she didn't have magical powers anymore, Orphen felt it was strange how her eyes fell upon Cleo.

Cleo was walking around, she stopped in front of Majic. They seemed to start a conversation.

"I found this.....it's yours."

She threw something towards him, it was his pendant—a Dragon wrapped around a sword. He took it, played with the broken chain, and then he saw her. It was Cleo, he rushed to put the pendant into his pocket.

"I'm really tired.....could you please give me a massage."

Cleo was shocked, she blinked her eyes.

"Really? Are you serious?"

"No, I'm sure you won't be any good."

"You won't know unless I try."

"Yes, I do."

He looked at the forest around himself, looking deep into the forest. He felt his mind drift, a voice echoed in his mind:

(You have to obey our commands!)

The words of the Deep Dragon's echoed in his mind.

At that time, Cleo said:

"Orphen....."

"Huh?"

Then someone shouted:

"Listen up! We'll be leaving the forest before sundown! The soldiers will be our guide! Don't get separated!"

It was Fiena. Majic stood beside her, he said:

"Master! Let's go!"

"Okay!"

Orphen waved in reply.

Then, everyone was gone——

A few minutes ago, Orphen had stood on that ground, all of a sudden something rose out of it. Soot and char rose, along with a shaggy head.

"Cough, cough, cough!"

Soil flew out from his mouth and nose, Vulcan coughed and shook his body. He wiped the blackness off his face, and complained:

“Haa...I didn’t expect breathlessness to be so painful!”

A sound came from below Vulcan.

“Now you know how I feel.”

“Idiot! It’s my first time experiencing this feeling!”

He pressed his foot down upon Dortin, he yelled and screamed as he was covered in dust.

“Damn that loan shark sorcerer, he almost got us killed!”

“.....You’re killing me.....”

“I don’t want to hear it!”

He hit his brother with his scabbard. He screamed no more, only sighed.

Vulcan struggled to climb out of the hole. His whole body was covered in dirt, this was common place for him.

“I will have my revenge! Nobody scorns the mighty Masmaturian Bulldog and lives!”

“How will you do that?”

Dortin asked. Vulcan stretch a finger towards him, and exclaimed:

“I will go to the Tower of Fang and accuse him of a heinous crime!”

“Implying they just won’t kill you.”

“Hahaha! Even they will fear me!”

Vulcan shouted, as he began to laugh. Dortin crawled out of the hole, with a sceptical tone, he said:

“Yes, yes. But first we’ll need to exit the forest, what’s your plan?”

His laughing stopped.

There was no answer, only the sounds of the forest—the sacred forest.

End of Sorcerous Stabber Orphen Volume 4 – Wolves, gather in the forest

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